

S E R M O N S

On the following

S U B J E C T S.

The Truth of the Christian Religion.	The peculiar Benefits of an early Piety.
The Nature of Saving Faith.	The Impossibility of serving two Masters.
The Scripture Doctrine of Justification.	The religious Use of Astronomy.
The Nature and Conditions of the Gospel-Covenant.	The Creation of Man in God's Image.
The Nature of Christianity with regard to Practice.	The Incarnation and Sufferings of Christ.
The serving God a reasonable Service.	The great Benefit of Consideration.
The Gain of the World no Amends for the Loss of the Soul.	The Resurrection of Christ from the Dead.
	AND,
	The intrinsic Excellence of the Moral Law.

By J. F A W C E T T. *R*

The Word of God Most High is the Fountain of Wisdom, and her Ways are everlasting Commandments. Eccclus. i. 5.

Blame not before thou hast examined the Truth: Understand first, and then rebuke. Eccclus. xi. 7.

L O N D O N,

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S E R M O N



S E R M O N I.

Of the Truth of the Christian Religion.

JOHN vi. 68, 69.

—*To whom shall we go? Thou hast the Words of eternal Life; and we believe, and are sure, that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*



WE have an Account, in the preceding Part of this Chapter, of our Lord's feeding five thousand Men with five Loaves, and two small Fishes, which was a Work of such an extraordinary Nature, that the *Jews* having seen this Miracle which *Jesus* did, so much resembling that of *Moses*, who had fed their Ancestors with Manna in the Wilderness, and knowing that he had left it upon Record, that God would raise them up a Prophet of their Brethren like unto him,

B

him,

him, could not forbear crying out, *This is of a Truth that Prophet that should come into the World* (a); and, finding him so able to supply them with Provisions, were for taking him, and making him their King (b). But our Lord, perceiving their Intentions, withdrew himself therefore from them; and his Disciples, taking Ship the same Evening for *Capernaum*, having left *Jesus* behind on the Land (c), were surpris'd in the Night, by seeing him walking on the Sea, and drawing nigh them; and, taking him for an Apparition, were afraid (d); but, being convinced it was he, they very gladly received him among them; and as another Instance of his Power, tho' the Sea was very tempestuous, they immediately found themselves at the Land, whither they designed to go (e). The Day after which, the People on the other Side of the Sea, seeing that there was no other Boat there, save that one into which his Disciples had entered; and that *Jesus* went not with them (f); and yet not finding him where they left him the preceding Evening; they also took Passage in some Boats which came from *Tiberias*, and went to *Capernaum*, to seek him there (g); and, having found him on the other Side of the Sea, were very solicitous to know when he came thither (h). But

(a) Verse 14. (b) Ver. 15. (c) Ver. 16, 17.
 (d) Ver. 19. (e) Ver. 20, 21. (f) Ver. 22.
 (g) Ver. 23, 24. (h) Ver. 25.

Jesus,

Jesus, without satisfying their Curiosity in that Point, tells them, that they sought him not, *because they saw the Miracle*, or that, being convinced thereby who he was, they wanted to hear his Doctrine, *but because they had eaten of the Loaves, and were filled* (i); and from thence takes occasion to exhort them, that they would not labour so much for *the Meat which perishes*, as for that which *endures unto eternal Life* (k). And after some further Discourse with them who he was, and about the Ends and Designs of his coming; the Result of all was, that many of his Disciples, either not sufficiently understanding, or not sufficiently liking his Doctrine, went back, and walked no more with him. Upon which our Lord says to the Twelve, *Will ye also go away?* And to which *Peter* answers in the Words of the Text, *To whom shall we go? Thou hast the Words of eternal Life; and we believe, and are sure, that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*

It were much to be wish'd, that all who profess his Name would learn to act as the Apostles here did, and not immediately give up their Faith, where there are the strongest Reasons to continue it firm and stedfast, only because of some few Things they may happen to meet with, and know not how to solve, or that may exceed the Limits of their

(i) Ver. 26.

(k) Ver. 27.

Understanding; as considering that there are a thousand Things in Nature, which it is beyond human Skill to account for; and that, however an absolute Faith may be wrong placed on Men, yet that it cannot be so when 'tis placed on God; and, in short, that there can be nothing more unreasonable, than for such fallible Creatures as we are, to give way to a too positive and hasty Temper in the Decision of Things of an important Nature, nor any thing more necessary for those who would arrive at Truth, than to learn to judge with Sobriety and Modesty as they ought to judge, and as the Nature and Evidence of the Things require. But we have but too many in the present Day, who either from some false Apprehensions of the Christian *Doctrine*, or for want of a due Attention to the Credentials of its heavenly *Author*, are not only for turning their Backs upon *that*, but, which is more than these *Jews* did, upon all *Revelation* whatever, which they will have to be nothing but a *vain Imposture*, the mere Produce of deluded Enthusiasts, or of designing and fraudulent Men. They have more Wit, as they pretend, than to be thus impos'd on; nor are they so credulous, as to yield to any such shallow Proofs as the Faith of most Men is founded upon: Tho' there is at the same time nothing *so vain*, which they will not have recourse to, if it has but a Tendency to support *their Cause*; which, tho' I would
not

not be so uncharitable, as to suppose the same of *all* of them, is yet, I cannot but think, with regard to no small Part of them, the favourite Cause of a *licentious Life*.

It would be an almost endless Task, to stand to answer every Objection, and to solve every Scruple, that they are pleased to make; and therefore, to be as short as possible, if we can but make it out, that *Jesus Christ* was really sent from God, or, which comes all to the very same Thing, that he was a Person every way worthy and deserving Credit, their whole Hypothesis must fall at once; and it will not only be evident, that there is a God, but that the Religion of *Jesus* is from him. Let but, I say, the Character of *Jesus* be once fairly settled, and then let Scepticks of every Kind say all they can, either against *Reveal'd* in particular, or against all Sort of Religion in general; the Testimony of *Jesus* will be sufficient to answer them all. Let them therefore but name their Doubts, and we will not despair to resolve them from this single Testimony. Are they in Doubt of the Being of a God? Here is one, who declares he came from him, and who stiles himself his Son. Are they in Doubt of the Reality of another World? Here is one, who occupied a high Station in it, and who was an Inhabitant of it before our World was formed. Do they question, whether the World was made by a Deity, or proceeds from Chance?

Chance? Here is one, who had a Hand in the making of it, and without whom nothing was made that was made. Or do they doubt of the Reality of a future State for Man? Here is one, who assures us, that he himself will raise and judge us, and that he has a Commission from God for that End.

These, I know they will say, are very high Pretensions; but they are not bound to believe them. And it must be own'd, indeed, that they are high Pretensions; and that it is but just, that a Person of such extraordinary Claims should support them by something extraordinary, and by doing something more than other Men. It is, I say, very readily granted, that there is no Reason we should believe such a Person, without his giving us some such evident Proofs as may be a sufficient Foundation to build our Faith in him upon. But then if it be once shewn, that *Jesus* has given all these Proofs, and all the Proofs that can be fairly desir'd, the Consequence must be, that we ought to believe him, and to look upon all that he has told us as true.

We may sometimes hear our Infidels asserting, that the Return of one of their Friends from the Dead would be a sufficient Evidence of another World, and that there was some Ground for Religion. And we have here an Evidence of this Truth from one, who did come from the Dead; and that not only to make a short Visit, but who convers'd with
his

his Disciples for the Space of Forty Days, and then ascended visibly into Heaven in the Sight of all of them. And what Evidence can there be in a transient Apparition (supposing they had such a one) compar'd with that of the long Continuance of the Son of God, and who had before lived in our World for above Thirty Years, and perform'd such stupendous Miracles in the Sight of Thousands, as may be sufficient to satisfy any, who are not resolv'd to the contrary, that he could be no other than what he pretended?

Waving therefore at present all other Sorts of Arguments, which are often above the Capacities of common Christians; and all other Sorts of Testimonies, but such as are in every one's Hands; let it suffice to shew, that we need not go any further to confirm our Faith, than to the Consideration of its immaculate and mighty Author, as held forth in the Scriptures themselves: And to this Purpose,

Let us, FIRST, begin with considering him in his *Moral* Character; in which we shall find him a most perfect Pattern of all kinds of Virtue, and of the most steady Abstinence from all kinds of Evil. His whole Life was a continued Course of Piety and Goodness, nor could the most malicious of his Enemies ever tax him with any real Crime. He was indeed often accus'd as one who held Correspondence with Devils, and as a Friend to Publicans and Sinners. But as his wonderful
Works

Works were the only Pretence for the one, so was his Zeal for the Conversion and the future Happiness of Sinners for the other: Nor is there any just Foundation from the Consideration of any thing that he ever did, to tax him with any thing of an evil Tendency. The most perfect Innocence may be aspers'd, and Malice and Ill-nature will be always attempting to blacken the fairest Characters. But there is certainly nothing in the whole Series of our Saviour's Actions, but what shews him to be a Person of the strictest Piety, and of the most firm and undaunted Integrity. What a Concern did he always express for the Honour and Glory of his heavenly Father! How ready was he at all times either to do, or to suffer, his holy Will! How continually did he employ himself in doing good, both to the Souls and Bodies of those he convers'd with! How far was he at all times from Flattery and Dissimulation, or from meanly fawning on the Rich and Powerful, the common Arts of ambitious and designing Men! And yet how easily might he have rais'd himself, had he been minded, to the highest Honours! But when did he ever discover the least Inclination that way, even tho' the Character he assum'd was such as afforded the fairest Pretensions, and as intitled him to it in the Opinion of all but himself, who with an immoveable Constancy declar'd the contrary? Yea, was it not his declining these Things, which

which made his Countrymen so much his Enemies, who, tho' they hated the humble, would have embrac'd the aspiring *Messias*; and, instead of accusing him as *Cæsar's* Enemy, would have gladly join'd to have gain'd him *Cæsar's* Crown? But there is no need to insist long upon this. If the History of his Life, as set forth in the Gospel, be true, as we shall presently shew that it is; it must be confess'd, that his *moral* Character deserves Regard, and that there is not the least Ground for Suspicion of Imposture in it. But, having thus briefly view'd him in that; let us proceed,

In the SECOND Place, to take a brief View of his *Natural*, and to consider the Account which he gives of himself, and of what Manner of Person he was. And here we shall find him asserting, that he came from God (*l*), and that he had Glory with him before the World was (*m*); that he was his only begotten and beloved Son (*n*); that he came to give his Life for the Salvation and the Life of Men (*o*), and to seek and save that which was lost (*p*); that all Judgment was committed by the Father to him (*q*), and that he had all Power given him, both in Heaven and Earth (*r*). It is not indeed to be denied, but that an honest Mind may be deceiv'd, and im-

(*l*) *John* vii. 29. (*m*) *John* xvii. 5. (*n*) *John* iii. 16. (*o*) *John* vi. 51. (*p*) *Luke* x. x. 10.
(*q*) *John* v. 22. (*r*) *Matt.* xxviii. 18.

pos'd upon, and fanfy Things to be true, which are not. But then it must be allow'd at the same time, that it is hardly possible for a Man in his Senses (as our Saviour always shew'd that he was) to be so far deceiv'd as such an Objection as this must suppose. But setting this aside; we have the most abundant Proofs, that he was indeed the Person which he said he was, from those stupendous Miracles which he wrought to prove it, and the Divine Powers which he prov'd himself thereby possess'd of. Let us proceed therefore,

In the THIRD Place, to consider the Miracles wrought by him, to support these Claims, and which he so often appeal'd to as sufficient Proofs of the Truth of them (*s*). It would indeed be both tedious and needless to enter into a particular Detail of these Miracles; it is sufficiently plain from the Gospel, that they were great and numerous; and tho' we have not an Account, as St. *John* has told us, of all of them (*t*), yet have we such amazing Examples of his Power and Greatness, as may be sufficient to convince us, that he was something more than a Man, and that there was nothing in Nature which was not subject to him. 'Tis true, many Prophets wrought Miracles before his Coming, and we have great Accounts of the Wonders that were done

(*s*) *John* v. 36. & x. 24, 25, 37, 38, &c. (*t*) *John* xx. 30, 31. & xxi. 25.

by *Moses*; but *Moses* never pretended to be any thing more than a Man; and for that Reason his Miracles could not prove, that he was; nor did either he, or any other of the Prophets, ever perform them, either to justify the same Pretensions, or in the same majestic and godlike Manner. They could none of them work Miracles just when they pleas'd; and when they did, by a Commission from a higher Being, it was very easy to see, that the Power was not theirs, but that it proceeded from some other and superior Cause. But the Case was not so, with regard to our blessed Saviour; he plainly declared himself the Son of God, and that the Power of the Father was in him, and he evidently shew'd it upon all Occasions. He could as easily heal at a Distance, as when nigh at hand, and his Word was instantly prevalent over every Malady; the most obstinate *Dæmons* yet durst not dispute his Commands, and even Death itself was in Subjection to him: Nor could he only exercise this Power himself, but communicate it also to others, who, by Commission from him, were enabled to do the like; and, by the proper Invocation of his powerful Name, perform'd such Wonders, as amaz'd the World, and at which its greatest Magicians were as much amaz'd and astonish'd as any. Sufficient Reason certainly for his Apostles, who knew all these Things, and were not only Eye-witnesses of his wondrous Works,

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but had also tried the Power of his Name themselves, to acknowledge as they did in our Text, that he was indeed *the Christ, the Son of the Living God*. Nor was he only proved to be so by the Miracles he wrought himself, and the miraculous Powers he conferr'd on others, but also by the Testimony of the Father Almighty, who by an audible Voice declar'd him his Son at his Baptism (*u*), and the same at his Transfiguration (*w*); as also by those remarkable Testimonials, that were given at the time of his Death (*x*). To which may be added (and which is very material), that even the traiterous *Judas* himself was obliged to attest the same Thing, who, tho' he must have been acquainted with the Imposture, had there really been any, much better than any now can be, was yet so far from even pretending to make any Discoveries at all of that Nature, tho' they were so necessary to justify both his *own* and the *Jewish* Proceedings, that, on the contrary, he expressly bore Witness to his Master's Innocence, and publicly own'd himself guilty of betraying the innocent Blood (*y*): Nor is it unworthy Remark, that *Pilate* also attested the same (*z*).

(*u*) *Matt.* iii. 16, 17. *Mark* i. 10, 11. *Luke* iii. 21, 22. *John* i. 32, &c. (*w*) *Matt.* xvii. 15. *Mark* ix. 7. *Luke* ix. 35. (*x*) *Matt.* xxvii. 45, &c. *Mark* xv. 33, &c. *Luke* xxiii. 44, &c. (*y*) *Matt.* xxvii. 3, 4, 5. *Acts* i. 16—20. (*z*) *Matt.* xxvii. 24. *Luke* xxiii. 13, 14, 15. *John* xviii. 38. & xix. 4, 5, 6.

But

But here, it is likely, it will be objected, that these are indeed *fine Stories*; but that we ought to consider from what Hands they come, and how little Assurance we can have of the Truth of them, as depending only on the Relations of his own Disciples, who would be sure to say the very best they could of him, and to magnify every thing to the highest Pitch. But how plausible soever this Objection may at first appear, it will upon a Second View be seen to have no Weight in it. For it is not only certain, that the Truth of these Things does not barely depend on the Words of his own Disciples, but is also sufficiently witness'd to by other Authors; but there is no Reason to doubt it, even tho' it did. For what Reasons could they possibly have, to relate the Story otherwise than it really was? They could hope for no worldly Advantages, or indeed any thing better than the Fate they met with, which could be no Temptation to any Man to turn Impostor. But, supposing the Temptations to such an Imposture had been ever so great and inviting, yet it must have been impossible for them to have succeeded, or to have gain'd any Profelytes by such *glaring* Falshoods, as those related by them in the Scriptures must be, if we but once suppose them to be so at all; for their Relations are not of Things done in a Corner, but on the open Stage of the World, and of which therefore the People could not but be Judges, whether they
were

were so done as related, or no. Nor did they only relate the Wonders which *Jesus* had done before them, and for the Truth of which they appeal'd to the World; but also further confirm'd their Testimony by the Wonders which they wrought themselves, and by adhering firmly to it to the very last, in spite of all the Terrors and Tortures which they suffer'd for it. Allowing therefore that these Relations come from his own Disciples, it is yet certainly sufficient to recommend them to the Faith of any Man, to consider that they are not only the Relations of such as could have no Reason to cheat us; but that the Relations themselves are such, as would by no means suffer it, and in which they could not do it, even tho' they would.

It will be to no purpose, here to object, either that many Impostors have obtain'd Belief, without any such Facts or Miracles at all; or that many Miracles have been often pretended, and that Multitudes have also believ'd them, which yet in reality were never wrought. For, allowing that Impostors have obtain'd Belief without the Help of Miracles at all; yet will this by no means prove, that a Religion appealing to such Miracles as the Scriptures speak of, could ever have been believ'd, unless the Facts thus appeal'd to were true. And tho' the World may have been ever so often impos'd upon in this Particular, either with regard to Facts done in a Corner,
or

or in long-past Ages; yet were the Miracles of our Saviour, and his Apostles, of so plain, and so public a Nature, and so publicly attested, not only in the very Age, but in the very Place in which they were done, and consequently so easily to have been contradicted, had they not been true (which yet no one at that time, nor for many Ages after, pretended to), that the very Belief of them, in such Circumstances, is of itself a sufficient Proof of the Truth of them; it being plainly impossible to conceive, that they could have gain'd Belief at that Juncture, in spite of all the Prejudices that Men had against them, if they had not been so apparently true, as to leave no room to doubt of them. If any Man thinks it to be a practicable thing to impose upon the World in such a manner, let him make the Experiment as soon as he pleases; but till he has either shewn it to be possible by his own Example, or by giving us some parallel Instance (which he never can), he must not take it amiss, that we still persist in our former Opinion, till we meet with more Reason to change it.

There is no other way, that I know of, to shift off the Force of this convincing Evidence, but either by supposing the holy Writings not to have been written at the time they pretend; or that these miraculous Relations were put into them, in some After-ages, when their Truth could not so well be look'd into. But the
holy

holy Writings so plainly declare themselves to have been extant in the very Days of the Apostles themselves, and to have, been sent at that Time to the Churches, and have, besides, been so frequently quoted in every Age ever since, that such a Supposition is absurd and impossible. Even the most seemingly trifling Parts of holy Writ, the *Salutations* and *Greetings* we so often meet with, and which, to a careless Inspector, may seem of no Use or Importance, are yet such an evident and standing *Security* of the *Time*, when these Writings were *writ*, and *from* and *to whom* they were *sent*, and, of course, such a *Proof* of the *Truth* of them, as, if duly consider'd, must strike Infidelity dumb, and force the *Scorner* to leave off his *Scorning*; for, if written *then*, they certainly must be *true*, they could not possibly be *believed* without it. And as to these miraculous Narrations being *added afterwards*, it is not only very unreasonable to believe, that the Christian World would ever agree to it; but they have been all along surrounded with too many Enemies, to suffer such a Practice to escape unnoticed, and which, instead of being of any Service to the Christian Cause (which could be the only Motive for their attempting of any such thing), could only tend to set their Enemies the more against them, and to expose them to such Reflections, as they could never expect any End of. Not to omit the manifest Necessity there is to suppose the Truth of
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these miraculous Relations, in order to give any probable Account of that so extensive Reception the Christian Religion so speedily met with, which had neither secular Interest nor Force to back it, but which prevailed and triumphed without and against them *both*, Converting several even of *Cæsar's Household*, and flying with such Rapidity thro' the *then known World*, that it even wondered to find itself so soon turn'd *Christian*.

But it will be further said, perhaps, Admitting that these Things are true, yet that Men have sometimes done great Wonders by the Art of Magic; that the Scripture itself very plainly allows it; and that therefore the working Miracles is no solid Proof, but that our Lord might, after all, be a wicked Impostor.

But the Answer to this is very plain and easy: For let but the Objectors produce either Magician or Impostor, that ever did any thing like him, and we will then very readily own, that it is not impossible but our Lord also might be of that Number. But if no History can produce a like Instance, and there never were any Pretensions of this Nature supported with equal Evidence; what Reason can there be for any the least Hesitation? Or what End can any Man propose to himself by making such Objections as this; but to deny a God, at the same time that he allows of a Devil; to fill the Universe with a wild Confusion; and to destroy all possible Security of the Truth of any

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thing?

thing? That Men have indeed sometimes done Wonders by the Art of Magic, is what we shall not pretend to dispute; but then, as they have been always done for some idolatrous or wicked Purposes, so is it very easy at the same time to observe, how it has all along been the Care of Providence, to distinguish Truth and Virtue by such shining Evidence, as Vice and Error never yet could boast of (a). And therefore, tho' every little, petty, trifling Miracle, may not be sufficient Proof of a divine Authority; yet still, when there are not only great Numbers of them wrought publicly and openly in the Sight of the World, but many of them such as seem to surpass the Power of any created Agent, unaided and unauthorized by the Deity; when they are performed by a Person of unblemished Character, and with an apparent Design to win Men to the Love of Virtue; when there appears nothing suspicious in the whole Affair, nor any thing that could be a Temptation to any Man to play the Impostor; it must be morally impossible in such Cases, that we should be cheated; and sufficiently clear to any Man of common Sense, and who does not labour under violent Prejudices, that such a Character, and so well supported, must be a sufficient Foundation for the Faith of all Men; and especially when it is further supported by Christ's rising

(a) *Exod.* Chap. vii. viii. *Acts* viii. 9 — 13.

from the Dead, and shewing himself openly before more than Five hundred Spectators (*b*), and afterwards ascending visibly into Heaven in the open Day-light, and in the Presence of all his Apostles (*c*), who confirmed the Truth of it by a thousand Miracles (*d*), and who could have no secular Motives for their asserting of any such thing. And therefore, if the Enemies of Christianity will not yield to these Proofs after all, it can be but a reasonable Request to them, either to give us some Proofs on their own Side, at least equal to those we have mentioned, or to leave us in the quiet Possession of such a rational Faith, till they can.

It is, I own, very easy for Men to *deny* these Things (or indeed any thing else, if they are so determined); to talk of Dreams, Delusions, and Impostures, and laugh at all as Fools besides themselves; but there is certainly a great deal of Difference between *denying* these Things, and *disproving* them: It is in every Person's Power to do the *former*; but where is the Man that can perform the *latter*? The most that Unbelief can do in this Case, is but to prove it possible, that they *may be false*; not to demonstrate, that they *really are so*; Grounds sure too weak for Men to risk their Souls on, that have any the least Concern or Care about them. For who in his

(*b*) 1 Cor. xv. 6. (*c*) 1 Cor. xv. 7. (*d*) See the *Acts of the Apostles* throughout.

Senses would ever run such a desperate Risk, on at best a mere *possible*, but very *improbable May-be*? and especially where the Danger is so great on one Side, while there is Safety at least, even supposing the worst, on the other.

It would be a still further Confirmation of our Christian Faith to consider the exact Accomplishment of our Lord's *Predictions*, and particularly of those relating to that so remarkable a Destruction, and as remarkable a Dispersion, of the *Jewish Nation* (*e*); and to the Spread and Continuance of his *own Religion*, in spite of all the Powers that should rise against it (*f*); of all which, how unlikely soever when those Predictions were first given forth, we have yet undeniable Demonstration at this present Day. But as a brief View of Things is always best remembered, and for the most part best understood; I shall not burden your Memories with a greater Number of Proofs than is needful; and as it must be sufficiently evident from what we have considered already, that the *Testimony of Jesus* is worthy of our *firmest Faith*, I shall not insist any longer upon it; but proceed to close with some proper Reflections.

And, FIRST, Have we here such a firm Foundation for our Faith and Trust? Then

(*e*) *Matt.* xxi. 43. *Matt.* xxiv. throughout. *Mark* xiii. 2. *Luke* xix. 43, 44. xxi. 20, &c. (*f*) *Matt.* xiii. 31, 32. xvi. 18, xxviii. ult. &c.

let us be highly thankful to our Heavenly Father for that great Light of the Gospel, which now shines amongst us; and by which we not only see a great deal further than we could by the bare Light of Reason, but also both with greater Certainty, and greater Ease. It is not the Happiness of every Nation to be thus highly and peculiarly favoured; a great Part of the Globe are still sitting in Heathenish Darknes, and left to find their Way by the bare Light of Reason; which how sufficient soever, if duly attended to, to discover many useful and important Truths, not only with regard to this World, but to that to come, is not yet to be set on any thing like a Parallel with that brighter Sun-shine, with which we are blessed in enjoying the Gospel. We have none of us any need to cry out, *Wherewith shall we come before the Lord, and bow ourselves before the High God? Shall we come before him with Burnt-offerings, with Calves of a Year old? Will the Lord be pleased with Thousands of Rams, or with Ten thousands of Rivers of Oil? Shall we give our First-born for our Transgression, the Fruit of our Body for the Sin of our Soul? For, behold, He hath shewed thee, O Man, what is good. And what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God (g)?* Nor are we left like the Ninevites of

(g) *Micah vi. 6, 7, 8.*

old,

old, to a *Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce Anger, that we perish not (h)?* But are expressly assured, on the other hand, that *God has so loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting Life (i);* and that *Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, neither have entered into the Heart of Man, the Things which God hath prepared for those that love him (k).* But to go on :

SECONDLY, Have we such sufficient Proofs of the Truth of the Christian Religion? Then let us be excited to the diligent Study of those sacred Writings, in which all its Doctrines and Precepts are transmitted to us. Let us treat them at all times with a holy Reverence, and give them the Preference to all other Writings whatever. Let us always look upon the *Bible* as the Word of God, and as what is able to make us wise to Salvation; as a Book given by our Heavenly Father to shew us the Way to a happy Immortality; to instruct us in fleeing from the Wrath to come, and to direct us in our Journey to the Heavenly Glory; and let us esteem it and use it accordingly. Let us not dare either with the formal Christian to neglect it, or with the profane Infidel to ridicule and make a Jest of it; But as we have *Bibles* in our Houses, let it be our Care, that

(h) *Jonah* iii. 9. (i) *John* iii. 16. (k) *1 Cor.* ii. 9.

we make a right Use of them; and let us not be guilty of receiving such an invaluable Treasure in vain. Let us set ourselves seriously to the Study of those sacred Scriptures, in which we have so much Reason to be assured we have *eternal Life* (l); and let us desire the *sincere Milk of the Word*, that we may grow thereby (m). Let that, and that only, be the Standard and Rule of our Faith; and let us give no Entertainment to any thing that is any way contrary to it. Yet let us not study the Scriptures, only to find out Matter for Strife and Contention, but so as that, by the Blessing of God with us, and upon us, we may be excited thereby to a sincere *Obedience to the Truth*, and an unfeigned *Love to the Brethren* (n). And, to this End, let us always take care, that we are not so intent upon the *Creed*, as in the mean time to forget the *Commandments*, or so fond of Scripture *Doctrines*, as either to neglect or disregard Scripture *Duties*, the latter of which we should always remember to be by far the most important of the two (o). And to conclude and shut up all;

In the THIRD place, Have we such sufficient Proofs of the Truth of the Christian Religion? Then let us see that we act and lead our Lives agreeably. Let this Gospel of *the*

(l) *John* v. 39. (m) *1 Pet.* ii. 2. (n) *1 Pet.* i. 22. (o) *Rom.* ii. 17, &c.

old, to a *Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce Anger, that we perish not* (h)? But are expressly assured, on the other hand, that *God has so loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting Life* (i); and that *Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, neither have entered into the Heart of Man, the Things which God hath prepared for those that love him* (k). But to go on :

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(h) *Jonah* iii. 9. (i) *John* iii. 16. (k) *I Cor.* ii. 9.

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(l) *John* v. 39. (m) *1 Pet.* ii. 2. (n) *1 Pet.*
i. 22. (o) *Rom.* ii. 17, &c.

Grace of God, that bringeth Salvation, which hath appeared unto us, lead us to deny Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godlily, in this present World, looking for that blessed Hope, even the glorious Appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all Iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar People, zealous of good Works (p). Being encompassed with so many and sufficient Witnesses, let us lay aside every Weight, and the Sin which doth so easily beset us; and let us run with Patience the Race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our Faith, who, for the Joy that was set before him, endured the Cross, despising the Shame, and is now set down at the Right-hand of the Throne of God (q). Having such glorious Promises, and such encouraging Prospects before us, Let us cleanse ourselves from all Filthiness of the Flesh and Spirit, and let us be perfecting Holiness in the Fear of God (r). And, Finally, Let us be steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that our Labour shall not be in vain in the Lord (s). And may the God of Peace, that brought again from the Dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the Sheep, thro'

(p) Titus ii. 11 — 14. (q) Heb. xiii. 1, 2. (r) 2 Cor. vii. 1. (s) 1 Cor. xv. ult.

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the Blood of the everlasting Covenant, make us perfect in every good Work, working in us that which is well pleasing in his Sight, thro' Jesus Christ, to whom be Glory for ever and ever! Amen (t).

(t) *Heb. xiii. 20, 21.*



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S E R M O N II.

Of the Nature of saving Faith.

JOHN XX. 30, 31.

— *And many other Signs truly did Jesus in the Presence of his Disciples, which are not written in this Book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that, believing, ye might have Life through his Name.*

HAVING in a former Discourse upon another Passage briefly considered the *Foundation* of the *Christian Faith*, it cannot, I apprehend, be improper, if we now proceed to consider the *Nature* of it, or what the *believing in Christ* implies in it; and especially as it is so plain from the New Testament, that it is a principal Term of Salvation, and such as is frequently put for the Whole of our Christian Duty. Thus St. *John* tells

tells us, *that to as many as received him, to them gave he Power to become the Sons of God, even to them that believe on his Name (a).* And our Lord himself, *that God so loved the World, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting Life (b).* And again, *Verily verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting Life (c).* And, *To him, says St. Peter, give all the Prophets Witness, that, thro' his Name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive Remission of Sins (d).* And, *I am not ashamed, says St. Paul, of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the Power of God (or a powerful Means in his Hands) unto Salvation, to every one that believeth (e).* From all which, with many other Places, that, were it needful, might be easily mentioned, it must be sufficiently evident, that a right Knowledge of the Nature of this Faith must be a Matter of the utmost Importance; and that there can be nothing which, as Christians, we ought to be more solicitously concerned about, except the putting this Knowledge into Practice; without which indeed it will profit us nothing. In the further Prosecution therefore of this important and momentous Subject, let us proceed to treat it in the following manner; *viz.*

FIRST, By considering the true Nature of this Faith in *general*.

(a) *John i. 12.*(b) *John iii. 16.*(c) *John vi.*(d) *Acts x. 43.*(e) *Rom. i. 16.*

SECONDLY, By a more *particular Consideration* of some of its *essential Properties*.

And then by shutting up all, in the **THIRD** Place, with an Inference or two from the Whole.

And, **FIRST**, We are to consider the true Nature of this Faith in *general*. And here, that we may not proceed on in our Inquiries without laying first some suitable Foundation, let us therefore take a brief View, before we go any further, of the Manner in which this Grace is described to us in the sacred Scriptures, that so our Definition of this Virtue, being taken from thence, may be both the more readily entertained, and the more confidently believed, and relied upon. And here we shall find it to be described to us in such Terms as these; *viz.* a believing God (*f*), a believing the Record which God has given us of his Son (*g*), a believing the Gospel (*h*), a believing the Truth (*i*), a believing in Christ (*k*), a believing that *Jesus* is the Son of God, as in our Text, and other Places (*l*); a Faith that worketh by Love (*m*), a Faith that purifies the Heart (*n*), a Faith that is productive of good Works (*o*), and a Faith that overcometh the World (*p*). From all which, considered and compared together, we may very justly and

(*f*) *Rom.* iv. 3. *Gal.* iii. 6. (*g*) *1 John* v. 10.
 (*h*) *Mark* xvi. 15, 16. (*i*) *2 Thes.* ii. 12. (*k*) *Acts*
 xvi. 31. (*l*) *1 John* v. 5. (*m*) *Gal.* v. 6. (*n*) *Acts*
 xv. 9. (*o*) *James* ii. 14, &c. (*p*) *1 John* v. 4.

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fairly draw the following plain Definition; *viz.* That it is *such a hearty Belief of the Gospel, and especially of those Parts of it that relate to Christ, and the Manner of our Salvation by him, as will effectually dispose us to behave agreeably.*

And, FIRST, This Faith consists in believing the Gospel: Whence it is stiled, as before-mention'd, a believing the Gospel, and a believing the Truth (for it is only upon the Authority of that, that our Faith in *Jesus* can at present be founded, and not on any personal Acquaintance, as was the Case with regard to the Apostles); and it has the whole Gospel of Christ for its Object, so as that whatever the Believer finds therein revealed, he looks upon himself as obliged to believe, whether it be matter of *Doctrine*, or *Reproof*, or *Correction*, or *Instruction in Righteousness* (q).

Whatever is found revealed in the whole Gospel is, as such, an Object of this Christian Faith; whatever is found, I say, revealed in the Gospel; for it is on that alone the Faith of Christians ought to be built, and not on any thing else, or besides it (r). From whence it naturally follows by an easy Consequence (and which ought to be mentioned for the Interest both of Truth and Charity), that every one who really believes the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour, and endeavours to understand it as well as he is able, is to be looked upon as a Christian

(q) 2 *Tim.* iii. 16.(r) 1 *Cor.* iii. 11.

Believer ; how great an Infidel soever he may be, as to the Virtue of unrevealed and uncommanded Ceremonies ; or how different soever from some of his Brethren, as to his Opinion about some intricate and doubtful Matters, and which the holy Gospel of our Saviour has said little or nothing about. Such Persons may indeed be reckoned Unbelievers as to some particular Doctrines of Men, or perhaps as to some particular Doctrines of Scripture, that are Subjects of doubtful Dispute ; but so long as they sincerely believe the holy Writings themselves, and whatever they can find to be therein revealed, tho' they may not be so just in their religious Sentiments, or so well informed, as may be the Case of some others, yet are they Believers in Christ notwithstanding, and ought therefore to be so accounted by all that bear his Name, so long as they profess themselves to receive and to believe his Gospel (s). For as it is not essential to the Nature of Men, that all Men every-where observe the same Customs, so neither is it any-way essential to the Christian Church, that there should be an Uniformity of Opinion as to every particular Doctrine, but only that we all agree in building our Faith upon one and the same Foundation ; and that, notwithstanding some Differences in lesser Matters, we still *keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace* (t).

(s) See the xivth of *Romans* throughout.
iv. 3.

(s) *Ephes.*

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But then, tho' the Object of this Faith is the whole Gospel in general, yet are there still some particular Parts of it, about which it is more immediately concerned than about others; and they are such as relate to the Person and Undertaking of our Blessed Saviour, and the Method of our Salvation by him; whence it is represented as *a believing in Christ*, and *a believing the Record which God has given us of his Son*: As for Instance, that that *Jesus of Nazareth*, who was crucified by the *Jews* at *Jerusalem* now above Seventeen Centuries ago, was really the Christ, the Son of the living God; the promised *Messiah*, which was promised to the *Jews* long before; and that Seed of the Woman, which was promised to our First Parents in Paradise; that he came into the World for the Recovery and Salvation of Sinners, and to teach us the true Worship of the one true God, thro' the one only true Mediator; that he died for our Sins, and rose again for our Justification, and after Forty Days ascended into Heaven, where he now is at the Right-hand of God to make Intercession for his faithful Servants, and from whence he shall come again to judge the World in Righteousness, to reward his Servants with an inconceivable and unending Felicity, and to punish the Disobedient with an everlasting and tremendous Destruction; that God is now thro' him reconciling the World to himself, and offering Pardon and Salvation unto all such as will believe and obey him; that he is
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by his Word, and by his Spirit, inviting and persuading us to do so, and has promised us all the necessary Aids and Assistances of his Grace for that End.

But, having thus briefly considered the notional Part of this Faith, let us now proceed to consider the practical. We have viewed it indeed as it lies in the Head; but it remains still, that we take a View of it as working in the Heart and Life, in which its Essence, as *saving*, consists. For it is not an idle Assent to the Gospel, tho' we should assent to it never so firmly, or plead for the Truth of it never so vehemently, that will be effectual to the Salvation of any of us, if it has not a suitable Influence on our Life and Conduct. The speculative and notional Part of it is indeed necessary, as previous to the practical; but, if this be wanting, will be so far from being available to save us, that it will only render us the greater Sinners, and subject us to the greater and the sorer Punishment (u). And it is upon this Account that I have described this Faith as *such a hearty Belief of the Gospel* — as will effectually dispose us to behave agreeably, as considering that our Lord is declared to be *the Author of eternal Salvation*, not to all without Distinction that shall name his Name, but only, as the holy Scriptures have expressly informed us, *unto all them that obey him* (w); and that, *as the Body without the Spirit is dead, so Faith without*

(u) Luke xii. 47, 48. (w) Heb. v. 9.

Works is dead also (x). This Faith is not therefore the bare idle Belief of any Set of Notions, how excellent or consonant to Truth soever, nor is it the belonging to this, or that, or the other Party; but such a firm Belief of the holy Gospel of our Lord and Saviour, such a firm Persuasion of the Truth of his Mission, and divine Authority, of the holy Doctrines he has taught us, and of the glorious Happiness he has promised to us, as has a truly purifying Influence on our Hearts and Lives, and works us up into a godlike and celestial Temper. It believes as well such Passages as these, *Except ye repent, ye shall perish (y)*, and *without Holiness no Man shall see the Lord (z)*; as it does those, wherein we are told, that *Christ came into the World to save Sinners (a)*, and that *Whosoever believeth in him shall not be ashamed (b)*; and it so believes them, as to excite the Believer from thence to live and act agreeably. It is such an *Assent* of the Understanding as draws the *Consent* of the Will along with it; and as leads us to eye at once the Promise, and the Precept; and to be as well solicitous to obey the one, as we are to know, and to believe the other. In a Word, it is such a Faith, as makes a Man a Christian; and that not only in Word, and in

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(x) *James ii. ult.* (y) *Luke xiii. 3.* (z) *Heb. xii. 14.*
 (a) *1 Tim. i. 15.* (b) *Rom. x. 11.*

Profession, but in Sincerity, and in Deed, and in Truth; such a hearty Faith in what our Lord has said, as will effectually lead us *to observe all Things whatsoever he has commanded (c)*; such a firm Belief of those invisible Realities, such a *Substance*, or, as it should rather be rendered, such a *firm Expectation of Things hoped for*, and such an *Evidence of Things not seen (d)*, as fires us with ardent Breathings and Desires after them; and, in Consequence of this, leads us to endeavour to *purify ourselves, even as the Lord our God is pure (e)*, to *cleanse ourselves from all Filthiness of Flesh and Spirit*, and to be *perfecting Holiness in the Fear of God (f)*.

But here perhaps it will be objected by some, If our Faith must necessarily be such a practical and operative Grace as you have said, how come Faith and Works to be so opposed to each other, as we find in Scripture they frequently are? To which I answer, That when Faith and Works are spoken of as opposite or inconsistent with each other, as to point of Necessity and Duty, it is plainly only to be understood of the Inconsistency between the Faith of the Gospel, and the ceremonial Works of the *Mosaic Law*; and not that there is any Inconsistency, as it would be very strange indeed if there should be, between a hearty Belief of the Gospel, and acting

(c) *Mat. xxviii. ult.*
iii. 3.

(d) *Heb. xi. 1.*
(f) *2 Cor. vii. 1.*

(e) *1 John*

acting agreeably to such a Belief of it, or between the trusting in Christ, and the doing those Things which he says; and that therefore the true Meaning of such Passages is no more than this; *viz.* that we are to be justified by the Faith of Christ, and not by the Works of the (Mosaic) Law (g), or, as 'tis explained to the same Purpose in the same Epistle, that in Jesus Christ (or under the Gospel - Dispensation) *neither Circumcision availeth any thing, nor Uncircumcision, but Faith which worketh by Love (h).* And therefore tho' St. Paul, when speaking of the Works of the Mosaic Law, not only opposes their Necessity in point of Duty, but even represents them as inconsistent with the Nature of true Christianity (i); yet is he so far from saying so of moral Duties, that he expressly assures us, on the other hand, that it is a faithful Saying, and such as ought to be affirmed with great Constancy, that such as have believed in God, should be careful to maintain good Works (k); and if any Man, says he, teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome Words, even the Words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the Doctrine which is according to Godliness — from such withdraw thyself (l).

It is indeed further to be added, as to the Matter of Justification, that the being

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(g) Gal. ii. 16.

(h) Gal. v. 6.

(i) Gal. v.

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(k) Titus iii. 8.

(l) 1 Tim. vi. 3, 4, 5.

justified by the Faith of Christ, is not only contrary to the being justified by the Works of the *Jewish* Law, but by the Works of any Law (considered as a Law of Works) whatsoever, as, in order to be justified by any such Law, there is a plain Necessity for a full Obedience (*m*); whereas the Being justified, on the other hand, by the Faith of Christ, does as plainly suppose us to have sinned, and fallen short of our Duty, and to be incapable therefore of being justified any otherwise, when we have done the very best that we can, *than by the Grace of God thro' the Redemption that is in Jesus Christ* (*n*). And from hence may we easily see, how by the Works of the Law there can no Flesh living be justified, because by the Law is the Knowledge of Sin (*o*); and yet how a Man may also be justified by Works, not indeed as they are a fulfilling of the Law of Works, but as they are a complying with the Precepts of the Law of Faith (*p*); as also how our Father *Abraham* was justified by a Faith without Works, or that did not work according to the Law of *Moses*, for which Reason he is declared to be justified in Uncircumcision (*q*); and yet how his Faith notwithstanding was made perfect by Works, as when, being called, he obeyed, and went out,

(*m*) *Gal.* iii. 10, 21.

(*n*) *Rom.* iii. 23, 24.

(*o*) *Rom.* iii. 20.

(*p*) *Rom.* iii. 27. & *Jam.* ii. 24.

(*q*) *Rom.* iv. 1—11.

out, altho' not knowing whither he went (*r*); and as when, being tried, he also offer'd up *Isaac* in Obedience to God on the Altar (*s*); and lastly, that as there is as much Grace in justifying us upon such a practical working Faith, as God himself can possibly exercise, without giving Countenance to a wicked Life, so that it is as much as any Man ought to expect, or hope for, from him (*t*).

If it should be here insinuated, that thus to suspend our Salvation on any Works or Obedience of ours, is to make Christ but Half a Saviour; it need only be asked, Whether a Prince's forgiving a Rebel upon due Submission makes him only Half a Forgiver? Or whether if this be done thro' the Mediation of another, the Submission of the Offender makes him only a Half-Mediator? And the same Answer which serves for the one, will equally serve for the other. But let this suffice as to the Nature of this Faith in *general*: And let us now proceed, as was proposed,

In the SECOND Place, To the more particular Consideration of some of its *essential Properties*; and from which the Truth of the foregoing Account of it will be yet further confirmed and established.

And FIRST, It is recorded as an essential Property of this saving Faith, that it is such,

as

(*r*) *Heb.* xi. 8.

(*s*) *Heb.* xi. 17. & *Jam.* ii. 21.

(*t*) *Titus* ii. 11, 12, &c.

as was before observed, as *purifies the Heart*. Thus St. Peter declares to the Apostles and Elders assembled at *Jerusalem*, with respect to the Gentile Converts to the Christian Church, that God put no Difference between the *Jewish* Converts and them, *purifying their Hearts by Faith* (u). And every Man, says St. John, that *bath this Hope in him*, the Hope of obtaining that Salvation which the Gospel promises, *purifieth himself, even as he, to wit, God, is pure* (w). And indeed the Belief of the Gospel has so natural a Tendency to cleanse, and purify, and refine the Heart, that where-ever it is duly attended to, it cannot be, but this must be the Consequence. For what is the Belief of the Gospel, but the Belief, that the most High is a holy and Sin-hating God, and of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity? who *spared not the Angels that sinned, but cast them down to Hell*, or, as the Word more properly signifies, *into the dark Air; and delivered them into Chains of Darknes to be reserved unto Judgment*; who also *spared not the old World, saving only Noah, and his Family, who was a Preacher of Righteousness*; but *bringing in the Flood upon the World of the Ungodly*; and who also *turned the Cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into Askes, and condemned them with an Overtthrow; making them*

(u) Acts xv. 9.

(w) 1 John iii. 3.

them an Example unto those that after should live ungodly (x)? What, I say, is the Belief of the Gospel, but the Belief, that God has sent his Son Jesus to bless us, not by indulging us in, but by turning us away from our Iniquities (y); whom he has also set forth to be a Propitiation thro' Faith in his Blood, to declare his Righteousness — to declare, I say — his Righteousness, that he might be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus (z); together with other important and instructive Doctrines, but such as are all of them according to Godliness (a)? And what therefore can be more natural, than for the Belief of such Doctrines to have a purifying Influence on the Heart and Life? How should he set all his Affections on the Things of this Life, who lives in the believing Views of another and better? or fondly drown himself in sinful Pleasures, who lives in the firm Belief of their destructive Tendency, and in the due Consideration of their woful End? But to go on:

SECONDLY, It is also an essential Property of this saving Faith, that it is such as *works by Love*. Thus St. Paul tells us in a before quoted Passage (b), that *in Jesus Christ, or under the Gospel-State, neither Circumcision availeth any thing, nor Uncircumcision, but Faith which worketh by Love; that is, which*

is

(x) 2 Pet. ii. 4, 5, 6. (y) Acts iii. ult. (z) Rom. iii. 25, 26. (a) 1 Tim. vi. 3. (b) Gal. v. 6.

is productive of a sincere Affection, both to God and Man ; such as will lead us to love the Lord our God with all our Heart, and Mind, and Soul, and Strength, and so to love our Neighbour as ourselves, as to do unto him, as we would he should do unto us : Agreeable to which, he tells us some few *Verses* after, that *all the Law is fulfilled in one Word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thyself (c)* ; and again, that *the Fruit of the Spirit is Love, &c (d)*. And that this is not merely an uncertain or precarious Fruit of this Faith, but an essential Property of it, and such as without which it cannot be saving, is not only sufficiently plain, from its being here represented as the only Thing, which under the Gospel will avail us any thing ; but is put beyond all Doubt by the Words of St. *John*, who has expressly assured us, that *he that loveth not, knoweth not God (e)* ; and that as *Whosoever doth not Righteousness is not of God, so neither is he that loveth not his Brother (f)*. If you would see the Tendency of this Faith to produce this Affection within us ; it has certainly the directest Tendency to lead us to the Love of God, by the amiable and lovely Representation which it gives us of him, as that he is *the Father of Mercies, and the God of all Comfort (g)* ; one that would have
all

(c) *Ver.* 14.
(f) 1 *John* iii. 10.

(d) *Ver.* 22.
(g) 2 *Cor.* i. 3.

(e) 1 *John* iv. 8.

all Men to be saved, and to come to the Knowledge of the Truth (b) ; and that is not willing that any should perish ; but that all should come to Repentance (i) ; and, in a word, that he is one whose Nature is Love (k) ; and that has so loved the World, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should — have everlasting Life——and that the World thro' him might be saved (l). And can I really believe (says the believing Soul), Can I really believe, this Loving-kindness of my God towards me, and not be thereby excited to love him again ? Has he given his Son for my Salvation, and shall I not love and praise him ? Has he called me to the Possession of a glorious and unending Happiness, and, notwithstanding all my Unworthiness of so great a Favour, still bid me lift my Hopes even to the highest Heavens ; and is not this a sufficient Reason for me to love him with my best and strongest Affections ? Is it possible, that I can really and truly believe these Things, and that it should not work by Love unto so good a God ? And as such a Faith has such a natural Tendency to work by Love towards God, so has it also no less so to work by Love towards Men. For has God so loved us (will the Believer reason), and shall we not be hence led to love one another (m) ? Is it not highly fit, that I should endeavour to be like to God, and that I should strive to

G imitate

(b) 1 Tim. ii. 4. (i) 2 Pet. iii. 9. (k) 1 John iv. 8.
16. (l) John iii. 16, 17. (m) 1 John iv. 11.

imitate that disinterested and divine Benignity that I so much praise, and reverence, and adore, in him? Besides, is not this the Command of that God, who has done such great Things for me, and of that Saviour, who has so loved me as to give his Life for me? And shall I not endeavour to fulfil their Commandments? Shall I not be ready to do Good, and to forgive my Brother his Trespases, who have a God so ready to forgive me mine? Let me not be guilty of such great Wickedness as to be thus uncharitable, nor thus highly offend against God. So natural a Tendency has the true Faith of the Gospel to produce this excellent Temper within us, so pleasing to God, so excellent in itself, and so beneficial and advantageous both to ourselves and others. It would be intirely needless to add after this, that it is also such as will lead us to be careful to *maintain good Works*; for as the Heart cannot be purified without the Life, so neither can it work by Love, but it must also work by Obedience, since *this is the Love of God*, as the Scripture tells us, *that we keep his Commandments* (n). I shall only add therefore,

In the THIRD Place, That it is also an essential Property of this saving Faith, that it is such as *overcometh the World*; for *Whatsoever is born of God*, says St. John, *overcometh the World*; and *this is the Victory that overcometh the World*, even our Faith. Who is he that over-

cometh

(n) 1 John v. 2.

cometh the World, but he that believeth, that Jesus is the Son of God (o) ? That is, that so believes it, as to be prevailed upon thereby to put such a proper Trust in his most holy Gospel, and in the Reality of that better World he has therein revealed, as leads him to be above all Things solicitous for an Interest in it, and to that End to break thro' every Obstacle that would keep him out of it. Have I the Prospect of so great a Felicity (will it naturally lead the Believer to reason), and shall I foolishly lose it for a few empty Trifles? Have I not greater Things to mind, than any this World can boast of? Does it tempt me with Riches? What are all the Riches that the World can give, to the being an Heir of God, and a Co-heir with his Son *Jesus Christ*, the Heir of all Things? Does it tempt me with Honour? Who are so truly honourable as the Good and Virtuous? Or what is a more honourable Title than that of a Son of God, and an Heir of the Kingdom of Heaven? Or does it tempt me with Luxury, and sensual Pleasures? What are any of the Pleasures of Sin, and which can last at longest but a little Season, to those far superior and eternal Pleasures, that flow at God's right Hand for evermore? Let me then leave it to others to fight for Wealth and Grandeur: Let it be my main Concern so to fight the good Fight of Faith, as to lay hold on eternal Life: And let my Mind be fired with a more noble

and divine Ambition than any of the low Enjoyments of this World deserve. Thus does the Believer triumph by his holy Faith over all the Enemies that oppose his Welfare. If the World, and his Duty, come into Competition, he is perfectly acquainted by the Light of this Faith, to which Side it is his Interest to cleave; and, as he knows the Loss of his Soul is not to be recompensed by gaining the World, will hearken to none of its Temptations, that would put him in any such Danger. He knows that the Things seen are but temporal, whilst the Things that are unseen are eternal; and wisely prefers the greater to the lesser Good. He is not indeed free from the Temptations of the World; but he so fights against them as to overcome them, and is even more than a Conqueror, through the Grace of Christ being with and assisting him: And, though he may now-and-then be overtaken, as the *Apostle* expresses it, in a Fault (*p*), and the World and Sin may sometimes gain the Victory; yet does he still rise again from such Lapses by a true Repentance; and (as 'tis related of the *Romans* of old) though he may now-and-then be overcome in *Battle*, yet does he depart at last a Conqueror from the *War*.

Such is the Nature, and such are the Properties, of that holy Faith, which the Scriptures
speak

(*p*) *Gal. vi. 1.*

Speak of with such lofty Encomiums, and which is so often made the Condition of our future and eternal Welfare ; and to which I have not ventured to ascribe any one Property, but what is found to be ascribed to it in the holy Writings, that you might go upon sure Grounds in a Matter of such weighty Importance, and see that the Account I have given of it, is no other than what is given in the Scriptures themselves. All therefore that further remains as to this Matter, is only to proceed, as was proposed,

In the *last* Place, To draw an Inference or two from the Whole.

And, *First*, Hence may we see the Reason why this Grace of Faith is so often put for the Whole of our Christian Duty, and has the Promises of Salvation so often connected with it ; and that it is not, because it will be deemed sufficient without Repentance, and sincere Obedience, and the proper Exercise of those several Virtues, which are so necessary to the completing of the Christian Character, and to the rendering us duly qualified for the Christian Happiness ; but because it is such a fruitful Root, that it will not fail to produce them ; and they are all so feminally contained and comprehended in it, that whoever is truly possessed of that one, will also be soon possessed of all others. And, to shut up all ;

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In the *Second* and *Last* Place, Hence may we see also the Folly of such as pretend to a Gospel-Faith, while it is without any of those Properties the Gospel speaks of ; neither purifying their Hearts, nor working by Love or Obedience, nor leading them to conquer and subdue the World : For these are the inseparable Properties of that holy Faith to which the Scriptures have promised Salvation, the Gospel-Characters of a Gospel-Faith, and the Fruits that always grow upon that sacred Tree : And therefore, as where-ever we find these Fruits, we may thence safely gather, that the Tree is good ; so where-ever these are not, we may as safely conclude, on the other hand, that the Tree is bad, and that the Faith of such Persons is vain. And, indeed, with what Face can any Man pretend, that he believes the Gospel, whilst he refuses to take its Advice, and to be governed by it in his Life and Conduct ? Can he really believe, *that without Holiness no Man shall see the Lord* (q), and yet hope for Salvation, though he is not holy ? Can he really believe, *that the Wages of Sin is Death* (r), and yet hope for Life, though he continues in Sin ? Can this, with any Propriety, be called a believing the Gospel ? Or ought it not rather to be stiled a most manifest disbelieving it, and a giving it the Lye in the most shameful Manner ? Let him be of ever

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(q) *Heb. xii. 14.* (r) *Rom. vi. ult.*

so sober and demure an Aspect, and carry ever so many Marks of Humility in his Garb and Vestments, let him make ever so great Pretensions to Faith, and to an uncommon Portion of the Spirit of the holy *Jesus*; yet, if he is at the same time proud, and selfish, and uncharitable, or a Pharisaical Despiser of his Christian Brethren, if he gives a Loose to vicious and unclean Affections, or is easily tempted from the Paths of his Duty, where he has any Prospect of getting any thing by it, his Faith is worthless, and of no Significance; nor has he any thing of the Spirit of *Jesus*, or the Gospel, in him; which is a pure, and charitable, and obedient Spirit, and leads all that are possessed of it to be pure and holy, and to *love one another, as he gave us Commandment (s)*. For the Fruit of the Spirit, says the Apostle, is Love, Joy, Peace, Long-suffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Fidelity, Meekness, Temperance, against which there is no Law (t). Such are the Fruits of the Spirit, and of a true and scriptural Faith; and he that is possessed of these, and he only, is a true Believer. Let us therefore both try ourselves, and each other, by these Scripture-Marks, and always remember, that the Faith we are inquiring after (or however should be), is not an idle and unactive Belief of any Doctrines or Truths whatsoever, but such a lively, operative, and active Principle,

(s) 1 *John* iii. 23. (t) *Gal.* v. 22, 23.

ciple, as works a thorough Change in the whole Heart and Conduct, and such therefore as will not only lead us to call Christ *Lord*, *Lord*, but also to take care to *do the Things which he says* (u). To whom *be Glory and Dominion for ever and ever. Amen* (w).

(u) *Luke vi. 46.* (w) *Rev. i. 6.*





S E R M O N I I I .

Of the Scripture Doctrine of Justification.

G A L. ii. 16.

Knowing that a Man is not justified by the Works of the Law, but by the Faith of Jesus Christ; even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the Faith of Christ, and not by the Works of the Law; for by the Works of the Law shall no Flesh be justified.

THERE is hardly any thing of greater Necessity, in order to a right Understanding of St. Paul's Epistles, than to have a just Idea of what he means by *the Works of the Law*, and *being justified by the Works of the Law*. It is to the want of a right Understanding of this, that all those furious De-

H bates

bates amongst Christians about Justification by Works have been owing, and which have rent the Christian Church in so much the more grievous a manner, as the Disputants on both Sides have brought the Scriptures to vouch their Opinion; it being as plainly declared, that we are to be justified by Works in some Places (*a*), as that we are not to be justified by the Works of the Law in some others (*b*). It is therefore for the setting this Matter in a proper Light, that I have now pitched upon this Passage as the Foundation of the ensuing Discourse; and in the further Prosecution of which I shall do the Three following Things; *viz.*

FIRST, Shew you plainly, from the Scriptures themselves, what it is to be justified by the Works of the Law.

SECONDLY, What it is to be justified, on the other hand, by the Faith of Christ. And then,

THIRDLY, and LASTLY, The great Difference that there is between this, and being justified by the Works of the Law.

And FIRST, I am to shew you, from the Scriptures themselves, what it is to be justified by the Works of the Law. And here as this
Epistle,

(*a*) *Jam.* ii. 21, &c. *Matt.* xii. 37. and *Rev.* xxii. 14.
(*b*) *Rom.* iii. 20. 28. and iv. 2, &c. *Gal.* ii. ult. and iii. 10, 11.

Epistle, and that to the *Romans*, are the chief Places where this Subject is treated of, so it is from thence we must seek Information. To begin then with the Epistle to the *Galatians*, out of which we have taken our Text: The evident Design of the Whole is, to recover the *Galatians* from an Error they had fallen into, of seeking to be justified by the *Jewish* Law, and which they were led into by some Judaizing Teachers, who had taught them, that it was not enough that they believed the Gospel of *Christ*, but that they must also yield Obedience to the Law of *Moses*. In order to convince them of this Error, the Apostle begins his Epistle with an Account of himself from the Beginning of his Apostleship, telling them that he was *an Apostle, not of Men, nor made an Apostle by Man, but by Jesus Christ himself, and by God the Father, who raised him from the Dead* (c). And, I certify you, Brethren, says he to them, *that the Gospel which was preached of me, is not after Man; for I neither received it of Man, neither was I taught it, but by the Revelation of Jesus Christ* (d); that is, I was not instructed in it by any Man, no not even by the Apostles themselves, but by our Lord himself, who appeared to me in my Journey to *Damascus*. *Neither went I up to Jerusalem, after my Conversion, to them that were Apostles before me, that I might learn of them; but I went into Arabia, and*

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returned

(c) Gal. i. 1. (d) Ver. 11, 12.

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 returned again unto Damascus. Then after
 Three Years I went up to Jerusalem, to see
 Peter, and abode with him Fifteen Days; but
 other of the Apostles saw I none, save James
 the Lord's Brother. And these Things which
 I write unto you, behold, before God, I lye not
 (e). Then Fourteen Years after, says he, I
 went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and
 took Titus also with me, that I might shew
 them the Liberty, which I took in conversing
 with the Uncircumcised; and then I communi-
 cated unto them that Gospel which I preach
 among the Gentiles (f); nor did they at all
 oppose it, or add any thing to it, or compel
 Titus to be circumcised, as they would, if they
 had looked on it as necessary (g): But, on
 the contrary, when they perceived the Grace
 that was given unto me, they gave to me and
 Barnabas the Right-hands of Fellowship, that
 we should still go on to preach to the Heathen,
 as we had done hitherto; only they would that
 we should remember the poor Christians in Ju-
 dea, which I also was forward to do (h). And
 when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood
 him to the Face, for that, contrary to his for-
 mer Practice, upon the Coming of certain from
 James, he had left off to converse with the
 Gentiles, fearing the Circumcision (i). Upon
 which, when I saw that they walked not up-
 rightly, according to the Truth of the Gospel,

(e) Gal. i. 17--20. (f) Chap. ii. 1, 2. (g) Ver.
 3. 6. (h) Ver. 7--10. (i) Ver. 11, 12.

I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew (to whom alone the Law of Moses was given), yet still as a Christian livest after the Manner of the Gentiles, freely eating and conversing with them, as thou hast done since thy Vision, until now of late, and not as do the Jews, who abstain from such Things as unclean, Why now compellest thou the Gentiles, by this thy unchristian Example, to live as do the Jews? When even we who are Jews by Nature, and not Sinners of the idolatrous Gentiles, yet knowing, and being convinced in our own Consciences, that a Man is not justified by the Works of the Law, but by the Faith of Jesus Christ, even we, I say, have quitted the Law, and have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the Faith of Christ, and not by the Works of the Law, which are unable to justify any Man (k). Thus stands the Text, with regard to the preceding Context; and from which, without going further, it is, I think, very plain and apparent, that what the Apostle here means by being justified by the Works of the Law, is the being justified by Circumcision, and by a Compliance with the Precepts of the Law of Moses; and that he is not speaking at all against the Righteousness or Obedience of Faith, or of any such Works as are commanded by the Laws of Christ, but, on the contrary, strongly pleading and contending for our Observance of these, and these only.

(k) *Gal. ii. 14, 15, 16.*

only. However, if any one thinks, that this is not sufficiently apparent, I shall, for his further Satisfaction, proceed to evince it more fully. And here, if we do but look to the *succeeding Chapter*, we shall see plainly, that the Law he is speaking of, is that Law which was given to the *Jews* Four hundred and Thirty Years after the Covenant made with *Abraham*, and which was added because of Transgressions, till the promised *Seed* should come (l), which ties it down so plainly to be the Law which was given by *Moses*, as to leave no room to doubt of it. If we look further into the *Fourth Chapter*, we shall find him expressly informing them, that the Covenant which was given from *Mount Sinai*, *gendreth to Bondage* (m), and therefore earnestly exhorting them in the Beginning of the *Fifth*, to *stand fast in the Liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and not to be intangled again with the Yoke of Bondage*. For, *Behold, I Paul*, says he, *say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing; for I testify again to every Man that is circumcised, that he is a Debtor to do the whole Law* (n). You see therefore plainly, that the Law, which the Apostle is all along speaking of, and which he so earnestly contends that we are not to be justified by, is no other than that which was given by *Moses*, and which therefore cannot justify ;

(l) Chap. iii. 17. 19. (m) Chap. iv. 24. (n) Chap. v. 1, 2, 3.

justify ; because, as the *Apostle* very justly observes, *it curses every one that continues not in all Things written therein to do them (o)* ; and consequently all that are under it, must for that Reason be under the Curse of it. But let us now proceed to the Epistle to the *Romans*, and see what Law he is speaking of there ; and here we shall find, that he does not confine himself, as in that to the *Galatians*, to the Law of *Moses* only, but opposes Justification either by that, or by the Law of *Nature*, shewing, that both *Jews* and *Gentiles* are all under Sin ; that neither of these Laws had been kept by them ; and consequently, that no Justification could be expected by either upon that Account. He begins, in his *First Chapter*, with considering the Case of the *Gentiles*, whom he shews to have broken in many Instances the Law of Nature ; and then proceeds, in the *Second*, to consider the Case of the *Jews*, whom he shews to be equally guilty with regard to the Law of *Moses* ; and concludes at last, in the *Third Chapter*, that as *all had sinned, and fallen short of the Glory of God*, so no Man could be justified by the Law he was under, whether *Jew* or *Gentile*, or, in short, by any other than that *Law of Faith*, which God had now equally propounded for the Justification of both : That even *Abraham* himself, as in the *Fourth Chapter*, was justified no other way ; that it was not his fulfilling

(o) Chap. iii. 10.

filling the Law, but his Faith, which was counted for Righteousness; and that *it was not written for his sake alone, that it was thus imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the Dead, who was delivered for our Offences, and raised again for our Justification.* But, having thus seen from the Scriptures themselves, what it is to be justified by the Works of the Law, and how impossible it is to expect it, upon any other Condition than that of a perfect Obedience; let us now proceed, as was proposed,

In the SECOND Place, to see what it is to be justified, on the other hand, by the Faith of Christ. We have already seen, that, by the Law, both *Jews and Gentiles* are all under Sin; that there is not a Man upon Earth, that can truly plead Not guilty; and consequently not one, that is not liable to its condemning Sentence. Its Curse reaches to every Man living, let his Sins have been greater or less; for as it is too plain to be denied, that all Mankind are Sinners, so it is as plain from the Law, that all Sinners are under the Curse of it, and therefore cannot be justified or acquitted by it. The only thing that looks like a Remedy in this deplorable Case, is Repentance; but to this the Law itself pays no regard; it insists

insists on a perfect and complete Obedience ; and, if its Precepts are broken, it is not Repentance that can screen from its Vengeance, but it proceeds immediately to Condemnation, notwithstanding any Pleas of Penitence whatever * : And therefore if any such are saved, they are not saved by the Law, but it is an Act of Grace, and the Rigour of the Law in that Case is dispensed with : If any such, I say, are justified, it is not Justification by the Law, which none can claim, but those who keep the Law ; but it is being justified freely by an Act of Grace, and upon such Terms as Grace alone has provided. Were we therefore to be judged by the Law, we must all fall under its condemning Sentence, there being not a just Man upon Earth, that has done Good, and sinned not, no not one : But it is our Comfort, that this is not our Case ; our heavenly Father has found us a Remedy ; and, notwithstanding that we are all of us guilty, and that the Law has concluded us all under Sin, yet it has pleased our heavenly Father, of his Grace and Favour, to send his Son for an atoning Sacrifice, and thereby to redeem us from the Curse of the Law, that we might live through him ; and to proclaim it publicly in his holy Gospel, that if any, how great a Sinner soever, will but believe in his Son Jesus Christ, and become his true Disciple, he shall not only be delivered from that Curse of the Law, to which he was liable before as a

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Sinner,

* See this further illustrated, Serm. XII.

Sinner, but shall be also further intitled to that eternal Life which is his gracious Gift through Jesus Christ our Lord. So that though we cannot be justified by the Works of the Law, or by any such Obedience as the Law requires, which it is now out of our Power to yield, yet our Faith in Christ shall be accepted instead of it; and our Submission to his Authority shall be sufficient to justify us from all things, from which we could not be justified by that Law of *Moses*, or any other Law whatever, but the *Law of Faith*, which has been graciously appointed for that End by God. For, *By the Deeds of the Law*, says the Apostle, *there shall no Flesh be justified in his Sight; for by the Law is the Knowledge of Sin. But now the Righteousness of God without the Law is manifested, being witnessed by the Law, and the Prophets; even the Righteousness of God, which is by the Faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe; for there is no Difference; for all have sinned, and come short of the Glory of God; being justified freely by his Grace through the Redemption that is in Jesus Christ, whom God has set forth to be a Propitiation, through Faith in his Blood, to declare his Righteousness for the Remission of Sins that are past, through the Forbearance of God: To declare, I say, at this Time his Righteousness; that he might be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus (p).* And thus, as, by one Man's Disobedience,

obedience, the whole Race of Mankind were made Sinners ; so by the Obedience of one, on the other hand, shall all that believe be made righteous (q). Not that any Faith will be sufficient to justify us, or that it is enough to this Purpose, that we only believe in *Jesus* as the true *Messiah*, and that we trust to what he has done for us, without any regard to what he has commanded should be done by us. No, do not deceive yourselves by any such groundless Surmises ; the holy Scriptures have nowhere declared to us, that he that believes, that *Jesus* is the Christ, shall be justified, let him act how he will. They have indeed promised Justification to Faith ; but then it is to such a Faith as is lively and operative, and not to such as is dead and unactive. Were a bare Assent of the Understanding sufficient to this Justification, we might almost ask, who among us could perish ; for the most profligate Christians are possessed of this, and even the very Devils possess it, and tremble. Ask even the reprobate Blasphemer, who pours out his Curses upon all around him, and makes the Streets ring with his loud Execrations, and you will find, that even he is not destitute of such an Assent of the Understanding as this. If you ask him, If he believes, that *Jesus* is the true *Messiah*, or that he died for the Sins of the World, he will, it is like, tell you, that he never made any doubt of it ; and, it

may be, swear, As he hopes to be saved, that he ever detested all Thoughts to the contrary. But must we therefore call such a Man a true Christian? Must we believe him to be in a justified State? Or tell him, that he has no Reason to doubt his Salvation? You are all convinced, I am persuaded, at the very Mention of it, of the gross Absurdity of such a Proceeding; you are very sensible, that the Religion of *Jesus* has its Laws and Commandments, as well as the Religion of *Moses*; and that therefore it is not enough to profess this Religion, unless we also take care to live up to it; that though Christ has delivered us from the Curse of the Law, yet that he has not freed us from all Obligation to it; or that how much soever he has freed us from the Law of *Moses*, yet that he has no-where freed us from our Obligations to observe *his own*; But that, on the contrary, the Faith which he requires, is of such a lively and operative Nature, as will lead us to observe the *new Laws* we are under; and that if it does not, it is but useless and vain. You cannot be ignorant, that this is the Doctrine of Christ, that it is *not every one that saith unto him, Lord, Lord, that shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven: But he that doth the Will of his Father, which is in Heaven* (r). Nor can you easily forget how expressly you have been told by St. *James*, that, *as the Body without the Spirit is dead, so Faith without Works is dead*

(r) *Matt. vii. 21.*

dead also (s). And is it only St. *James* that has said this? Or rather, does not the whole Scripture constantly say the same? If you inquire of St. *Paul*, who has been thought by some to teach a different Doctrine, you will find, that it is not owing to any thing that St. *Paul* has said, but to their want of understanding him, that any such Opinion has been fathered upon him. I have before observed, and it is too plain not to see it, that this whole Epistle to the *Galatians* was written with this very Design; to wit, to oppose the *Jewish* Doctrine of the Necessity of observing their Law; and that he therein tells us, in so many Words, that, by the Works of the Law, there shall no Flesh be justified; that we are to be justified only by the Faith of Jesus Christ, and that the Works of the Law have no hand in the Matter. But will it bear to be asked, Whether that Faith by which Man lives, must be a living Faith, or a dead one? Or can it be any way fairly inferred from *The just shall live by Faith*, that a Man shall equally live by it, be he just, or no? Only ask St. *Paul*, what he means by the Faith of Jesus Christ, and what Sort of a Faith it is that is required in him; and he will tell you in this very Epistle, that it is such a Faith as *works by Love*, and as makes the Man that is possessed of it to become a *new Creature*. Read but over his *Fifth* and *Sixth Chapters*, and then doubt of this Truth,

(s) *Jam. ii. ult.*

Truth, if you can. He exhorts them earnestly to *stand fast in their Liberty*, and not to be *entangled again with the Yoke of Bondage*: He plainly shews them, that going back to the Law, is in effect a renouncing the Gospel; that we are to *wait for the Hope of Righteousness*, or *Justification by Faith*; and that, in *Jesus Christ*, neither *Circumcision* avails anything, nor *Uncircumcision*; that it does not signify at all, whether a Man be a *Jew*, or a *Gentile*, whether he be circumcised or uncircumcised, provided he has but such a Faith as *works by Love* (t). Ye have been called, says he, *Brethren, unto Liberty*, to a perfect Freedom from the *Mosaic Yoke of Bondage*: Yet *use not your Liberty for an Occasion to the Flesh*, but by *Love serve one another*: And, having reckoned up several of the Works of the Flesh, he immediately adds, at the End of the Catalogue, *Of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in Time past, that they which do such Things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God* (u). And, *Be not deceived*, says he, *God is not mocked*; for *whatsoever a Man soweth, that shall he also reap*. For he that *soweth to his Flesh*, shall of the *Flesh reap Corruption*; but he that *soweth to the Spirit*, shall of the *Spirit reap Life everlasting*. And let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due Season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore Opportunity, let us do Good unto all

(t) Gal. v. 1-6. (u) Ver. 11. 19, 20, 21.

all Men, especially unto them, who are of the Household of Faith. Ye see how large a Letter I have written unto you with my own Hand. As many as desire to make a fair Shew in the Flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised, only lest they should suffer Persecution for the Cross of Christ. For neither they themselves, who are circumcised, keep the Law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your Flesh. But God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the World is crucified unto me, and I unto the World! For in Christ Jesus neither Circumcision availeth any thing, nor Uncircumcision, but a new Creature, a Life governed by the Faith, and regulated by the Precepts of the Laws of Christ. And as many as walk according to this Rule, Peace be on them, and Mercy, and upon all the Israel of God (w). If it should still be said, as perhaps it may by some, that how much soever our Obedience to the Laws of Christ may be considered as a Term of our Salvation, yet that it will not follow from hence, that it is therefore of any regard in our Justification; I shall only beg Leave to observe, that as the Apostle James, in his deciding this Matter, uses the Words being justified or saved indifferently; so they are also both ascribed in the Scriptures to the self-same Causes, both equally promised on the same Conditions, and both equally declared to be
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(w) Gal. vi. 7--16.

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of *Faith*, and not of *Works*; and that, for the
very same Reason, *lest any Man should boast*.
But this naturally leads us, as was proposed,

In the THIRD Place, To consider the great
Difference that there is between this, and Justi-
fication by the Works of the Law. For if the
Faith of Jesus Christ must, after all, be made
perfect by Works; if the Faith by which we are
justified must be such as works by Love, and
as is productive of an hearty and sincere Obe-
dience; if, though it has no regard to the
Works that go before it, it has yet a ma-
nifest regard to those that follow after it;
wherein, may it be asked, does this differ
from Justification by the Works of the Law,
since there is a plain regard to be had to our
Works in the one Case as well as the other?
To which the Answer, from what has been
said, must be very plain and easy: For let us
only remember what it is to be justified by
the Works of the Law, and what by the
Faith of Christ, and the Difference between
them will appear at first Sight. To be justi-
fied by the Works of the Law, is to be justi-
fied, as innocent, upon due Obedience: To be
justified by the Faith of Christ, is to be justi-
fied, as guilty, by an Act of Grace, and upon
quite different Terms than any the Law allows
of: And who then must not see the Difference
at first View between them? Is there no Dif-
ference between being innocent and guilty? Is
there

there no Difference between one who stands in need of Pardon, and one who stands in need of none ? Between one who has broken the Law, and one who has perfectly kept it ? If there is, then there is just so much Difference as this, between being justified by the Faith of Christ, and being justified by the Works of the Law : For Justification by the Works of the Law, is the Justification of an innocent Person ; it is the Justification of a Person that has never sinned, but that has continued in all things written in the Law to do them ; for the Law justifies upon no other Condition, and it is for that very Reason that no Flesh can be justified by it. But then Justification, on the other hand, by Faith (how operative or active soever), is the Justification of a guilty Offender, and who has deserved to die the Death ; it is the Justification of a condemned Malefactor, against whom the Sentence of the Law is gone forth ; of one who has broken the Law, and who therefore cannot be justified by the Law ; and therefore the Justification of such a Person, let it be upon what Terms or Conditions it will, must be a Justification, not of Works, but of Grace ; and how much soever it may oblige us to perform good Works, and to the utmost of our Power to yield Obedience to the Laws of our Saviour, upon Pain of forfeiting all Benefit and Advantage from him, yet is there still a very manifest Difference between the

Justification of a Sinner on such Terms as these, and that Justification, on the contrary, by due Course of Law, to which no Man, as a Sinner, can have any Claim. If it be further said, But are not most of the Laws of Christ the very same with the Precepts of the Law of Nature, and with the moral Precepts of the Law of *Moses*? and, consequently, is not Justification by them, and by the Works of the Law, still the same? the Difference is easily seen; in that we are not justified by our Observance of these, as considered as Parts of that Law, which requires a perfect and complete Observance; but, as they are considered as Parts of that new Law of Grace, in which our Faith in another is as an Atonement for our Defects in ourselves, and an Evangelical Fidelity supplies the Want of a Legal Perfection.

Upon the Whole, therefore, from hence may we learn, how very far the holy Gospel of our Saviour is from giving Countenance to those immoral and licentious Doctrines, which some have endeavoured to fasten upon it; who, under a Pretence of renouncing Justification, as *St. Paul* teaches by the Works of the Law, have not only run down the Works of the Law, but those of the Gospel too. For as we have seen what *St. Paul* means by Justification by the Works of the Law, and who are *Legal Preachers* in his Sense, namely, such as preach the Necessity of

of Circumcision, and of other *Jewish* Observances; so we cannot but see, that there are no Parties of Christians which at this Day come under that Title. Justification by the Works of the Law, is by all allowed to be a thing impossible; there is no Man so foolish as to pretend to it; every Man sees, by his own Reason, that no Man can be justified by the Law of Nature; and every Christian sees as plainly from the holy Scriptures, that there is no Justification to be expected from the Law of *Moses*; and therefore there are none that expect it any otherwise than by the Grace of God thro' Christ. And why then all this Outcry against Legal Preaching, when there is not the least Foundation to ground any such Outcry upon? It is sufficiently known to be the Doctrine of St. *Paul*, that we are to be justified only by Faith, and without the Deeds of the Law: But does there any more follow from hence, than that the Deeds of the Law are unnecessary, that the *Jewish* Rites are no longer in force, and that there is nothing further required of us, than to have a right and operative Faith in the Gospel? Does it follow from hence, that our Obedience to the Gospel is as needless as it is to the Law? Or is there any thing in the Belief of the Gospel that is any-way inconsistent with acting agreeably to it? If not, what is this to the Purpose? If they can prove, indeed, that the Law and the Gospel are both the same thing, or that Christ

has equally freed us from all Obligations to either; if they can prove, that he has given us Laws with no other View, than that we should break and despise them; or that he requires us to believe in his Gospel for no other Reason, but that we may know the better how to disobey it; they will then indeed obtain all they aim at: But till then, to talk ever so long of being justified by Faith, and without the Deeds of the Law, can certainly never prove, that we can be justified by a Faith that is not productive of the Deeds of the Gospel. For what, I beseech you, has St. *Paul's* Doctrine, that we are to be justified by the Faith of the Gospel, and without the Deeds of the *Mosaic* Law, to do with our being justified by such an idle and inactive Faith, as pays no regard to Law or Gospel either? Could St. *Paul* possibly mean, by our being justified without the Deeds of the Law, that we may be justified and saved without a Regard to those Duties of the Gospel, without which he himself has told us, more than once, it is in vain to expect it? If this was his Meaning, why does he trouble us with Precepts at all? Or why has he concluded all his Epistles with earnestly pressing the Observance of these things upon us? But if, as is plainly the Case, the Deeds of the Law and the Gospel are different Things, then Circumcision may be nothing, and Uncircumcision may be nothing; *Jewish* Rites and Ceremonies shall be of as little avail

as you will : But what is this to the Holiness of the Gospel ? Or how does it prove, that that is nothing too ? Every Man that reads his Epistles, and considers the Scope and Design of them, can never, I am persuaded, put any such Meaning upon them ; but the Misfortune is, and which has been the Occasion of almost all Errors, that, instead of considering a whole Epistle, Men have only attended to here-and-there a particular Scrap of it ; and, without either considering the Design of the Writer, or its Connexion and Agreement with the other Parts of it, have proceeded to expound it just as their own Imaginations have led them, and then confirmed it as irrationally, by other little Scraps of like Import, and which, when considered in Connexion, are able to prove no such thing. Thus, when the Deeds of the Law are once expounded of the Duties of the Gospel, every Passage that speaks any thing contemptibly of the Deeds of the Law, must, according to that Exposition, speak contemptibly of all Duties whatever ; and St. *Paul's* renouncing his own Righteousness, as a *Jewish* Pharisee, may, by the same Liberty of Exposition, stand for his renouncing his own Righteousness, as a faithful Christian ; that is, any thing may be made to prove any thing, at the same time, that, when fairly considered, it will be found to prove just the Reverse (x). And, indeed, what Sort of a
Person

(x) *Philip.* iii. 2--9.

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Person

(x) *Philip.* iii. 2--9.

Person must we suppose the Apostle to be, to represent Works in one Place as intirely needless, and yet, in another, to press them upon us under Pain of eternal Destruction? Can there any other Solution be given to the Case than this, that the Works he speaks of so differently are not the same; and that therefore, though it is intirely needless to observe the one, yet it is still our incumbent Duty to observe the other? Nor is this a Matter of little Importance, but such as lies at the Root of Religion, and upon which our Salvation is greatly dependent; for as they are not likely to be careful to maintain good Works, who look upon them as Things of little or no Necessity, so if it is allowed, as the Scriptures have expressly taught us, that he only is righteous who does righteous Things, and that Christ will be the Author of an eternal Salvation only to those that obey him (y), there can need nothing further to be added as to the great Importance of understanding these Matters, and of taking care to regulate our Conduct by them. But, as I trust that by this time we plainly discern St. Paul's Meaning, and that we are in no Danger of expounding him in any such absurd and irrational Manner, so I shall now conclude this Discourse with the Words of that great Man to the Romans: *The Night is far spent; the Day is at hand: Let us therefore cast off the Works of Darkneſs,*
and

(y) 1 John iii. 7. and Heb. v. 9.

and let us put on the Armour of Light. Let us walk honestly, as in the Day; not in Rioting and Drunkenness, not in Chambering and Wantonness, not in Strife and Envy: But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not Provision for the Flesh, to fulfil the Lusts thereof.—Now, I beseech you, Brethren, mark them which cause Divisions and Offences, contrary to the Doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such, serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own Belly; and by good Words, and fair Speeches, deceive the Hearts of the Simple.—Now to him that is of Power to establish you, according to my Gospel, and the Preaching of Jesus Christ (according to the Revelation of the Mystery which was kept secret since the World began, but is now made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the Prophets, according to the Commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all Nations for Obedience of Faith), To God only wise be Glory, through Jesus Christ, for ever. Amen (2.)

(2) Rom. xiii. 12, 13, 14. and xvi. 17, 18. 25, 26, 27.



S E R M O N IV.

*Of the Nature and Conditions of the
Gospel Covenant.*

G E N. xvii. 1, 2.

*I am the Almighty God. Walk before me, and
be thou perfect ; and I will make my Co-
venant between me and thee.*

WHAT we are naturally led to by the
Words before us, is to consider the Na-
ture of that blessed Covenant, by which God
is in Christ reconciling the World to himself : A
Matter, no doubt, of the highest Concern to
us all, and which it must be therefore very
expedient for us to be well informed in. We
have here the Substance of that Covenant, as it
was made with *Abraham*, and in him with
all his spiritual and faithful Seed, and as suc-
cinct an Account as is to be found any-where
through-

throughout the whole *Bible*, as well of the Promise on God's Part, as of the Condition required on ours. God had indeed covenanted with *Abraham* to be his God before ; but he now appears to him again to renew it and to acquaint him more particularly what a God he designed to be to him ; and what he, on the other hand, required and expected from him. *I am*, says he to him, *the Almighty*, or the All-sufficient God ; for the Word properly signifies both : Therefore *walk before me, and be thou perfect ; and I will make my Covenant between me and thee* ; that is, to be Almighty or All-sufficient to thee, if thou take but care to be perfect ; or, as it is in the Margin, upright or sincere, before me. Such is the Nature of that Covenant that God made with *Abraham*, and that he has also made through Christ with every one of *us* ; for though, with regard to some Particulars therein after-mentioned, it may relate only to *Abraham* himself, and to those who naturally descended from him ; yet it is sufficiently evident from the Gospel, at least as far as our Text is concerned in it, that it belongs to all without Exception within the Pales of the Church, in all Ages, and under all Dispensations whatever. For, *As Abraham believed God*, says the Apostle, *and it was accounted to him for Righteousness, know ye therefore, that they which are of Faith, the same are the Children of Abraham*. And again, *There is nei-*

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ther Jew nor Greek, there is neither Bond nor
Free, there is neither Male nor Female; for
ye are all one in Christ Jesus: And if ye be
Christ's, then are ye Abraham's Seed, and
Heirs according to the Promise (a). But, not
to detain ourselves any longer in the Intro-
duction, the Words naturally instruct us in
the following Things: *First*, That God is an
Almighty, All-sufficient Being: *I am the Al-*
mighty God. *Secondly*, That he expects us to
be perfect or sincere before him: *Walk before*
me, and be thou perfect. *Thirdly*, That this
Perfection or Sincerity is a necessary Term
of the Covenant: *Walk before me, and be thou*
perfect; and I will make my Covenant between
me and thee. And, *Lastly*, That God's All-
sufficiency, on the one Side, is a sufficient
Ground for our Perfection, on the other: *I am*
the Almighty God: Therefore walk before me,
and be thou perfect, &c. And accordingly, in
the further Prosecution of this Subject, I
shall,

FIRST, Shew what is implied in the Di-
vine Almightyness or All-sufficiency.

SECONDLY, What is implied in that Per-
fection which he calls for from us.

THIRDLY, The absolute Necessity of this,
as a necessary Term of the Covenant.

And, FOURTHLY, The sufficient Reason
there is for it from the Consideration of the
Divine

(a) *Gal.* iii. 7, 8. and 28, 29.

Divine All-sufficiency. After which, I shall shut up the Whole with some useful Inferences and Conclusions from it.

And, FIRST, We are to consider, what is implied in the Divine Almightyness or All-sufficiency. And, in general, we shall find it to imply in it the Two following Things: *First*, That he is able to preserve us from every Evil; and, *Secondly*, To fill us with every Good: Both which are expressed by God himself in a preceding *Chapter*; as where he promises *Abraham* to be his *Shield*, and *exceeding great Reward* (b): As they are also in like manner by the holy *Psalmist*, where the Lord God is declared to be a *Sun and Shield* (c); the one to refresh and supply us with Good, and the other to preserve and defend us from Evil.

And, *First*, The Divine Almightyness or All-sufficiency implies in it, that he is able to defend us from every Evil. And what indeed can be able to hurt us, if an Almighty God be for us? What Creature is there in the whole Universe, that can pretend to oppose his Power, or to do any thing that he shall set himself to oppose or hinder? Though Ten thousand should rise against one, with a full Purpose to take and destroy him, yet can the Almighty, in an Instant, disappoint their Purpose, nor shall they be at all able to hurt him

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(b) Gen. xv. 1.

(c) Psalm lxxxiv. 11.

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 him without his Consent. It is not all the Powers of *Egypt* that can break his Measures, if he but once engage to set his People free (d) : Nor is he at any time at a Loss how to deliver a faithful *Elisba*, even though great Hosts of Enemies are sent out against him (e). And as God is thus Almighty to defend us from Evil, so is he also,

In the *Second Place*, To supply us and fill us with Good. He is that *Father of Lights*, from whom every good and perfect Gift comes down (f), and from whom every Joy and Comfort is derived, either in the Heavens above, or in the Earth beneath (g). He can satisfy our largest and most raised Desires, and nor only make us as happy as our Hearts can wish, but even beyond what is possible at present to enter into our Hearts to conceive (h). There needs but one Ray of the Light of his Countenance, and the Gloom shall be immediately dispelled from even the darkest and most disconsolate Conditions ; *Paul* and *Silas*, though in Prison, shall yet at Midnight break forth into singing (i) ; and the very meanest of his Saints shall have more solid Joys, than any the greatest Affluence of this World can give (k).

It might be added indeed under this Head, that, as the Divine Almightyness is thus abundantly

(d) *Exod.* chap. xiv. (e) *2 Kings* vi. 8, &c.
 (f) *James* i. 17. (g) *2 Cor.* i. 3. (h) *1 Cor.*
 ii. 9. (i) *Acts* xvi. 25. (k) *Psalms* iv. 6, 7.

dantly sufficient for the Preservation and Reward of his Saints, so it is also as sufficient to enable him to take an exemplary Vengeance on Sinners. But as this does not seem to be so directly intended in the Text, or to belong so immediately to his Character, as a God in Covenant, I shall therefore forbear from enlarging upon it, and immediately proceed, as was proposed,

In the SECOND Place, To consider what is implied in that Perfection which God calls for from us, and which is here represented as the Condition of his Covenant with us. And here I suppose I need hardly inform you, that it is not to be understood of such a *Legal Perfection*, as excludes all Kinds of Failings whatever, which, through the Weakness of the Flesh, is now become impossible; but only of such a *Gospel Perfection*, as God is pleased, through his Son, to accept of; and as it is but a Medium between an absolutely perfect Obedience, and a wilful Course of Sin. Let it be well observed, however, to prevent Mistakes, in a Matter of such Concern and Importance, that though it is not to be understood of such a Perfection as admits no *Failings*; yet that it still implies such a Conformity to God's holy Will, and such a firm Attachment to the Practice of his Commandments, as will not suffer us to do any thing *wilfully* and *deliberately*, that we are

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conscious will incur his Displeasure, let the
Temptations to our doing so be what they will:
For, *Whatsoever is born of God*, says the Apostle
John, *overcometh the World* (l). And as *who-*
soever abideth in him, in this Sense, *sinneth*
not ; so *whosoever* thus *sinneth*, *hath not seen*
him, *neither known him* (m). Would you
therefore know what it is to be perfect ? It
is to keep clear from all wilful and allowed
Iniquities ; or, if we should at any time fall
into them, as through Strength of Tempta-
tion it may *sometimes* happen, to rise from
them again by a sincere Repentance, and to
be more watchful against them for the Time
to come. It is not indeed inconsistent with
such unwilling and unavoidable Frailties, as
good Men have always complained of, but
could never be totally free from : But yet it
absolutely requires, that, as to the *general*,
we are not guilty of *wilful* Transgressions ;
and that we neither *indulge ourselves*, on the
one Side, in any thing that we know to be
evil, or in the Neglect of any thing, on the
other Side, that we know to be Part of our
Duty, or of the Faith and Practice which
God looks for from us. For, as it is a
Maxim in Christianity, that *no Man can serve*
two Masters, that is, whose Commands are
opposite to one another (n) ; so is it abso-
lutely necessary to this Perfection, that we
serve God, though with many Infirmities,
yet

(l) 1 *John* v. 4. (m) 1 *John* iii. 6. (n) *Matt.* vi. 24.

yet in the Sincerity of our Hearts, and in Truth, and so far at least, as to seek his *Kingdom* and *Righteousness* in the *first* and *principal* Place, and to prefer his Favour and Friendship to *all other things* ; in which the very Essence of Religion and Evangelical Virtue consists (o). But this naturally leads us, as was proposed,

In the THIRD Place, To consider the absolute Necessity of this Perfection, as a necessary Term of the Covenant, and to our having any saving Benefit or Advantage from it. And here it must put this Matter beyond all Dispute, if the plain Words of Scripture are of any Force with us, that there are not wanting a sufficient Number of Passages, in which its Necessity is strongly insisted on. For, *Whosoever shall break one of these least Commandments*, says our Saviour, *and shall teach Men so, he shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven* (p). And, having justly explained and enforced several of those righteous Precepts, which God has been pleased to give us to direct our Conduct, he at last concludes his Discourse with shewing the absolute and indispensable Necessity of them, the certain Salvation which would follow the observing them, and as certain Destruction which would ensue the Neglect of them.

Not

(o) *Matt.* vi. 33. and x. 37, 38, 39.
v. 19.

(p) *Matt.*

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Not every one, says he, *that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doth the Will of my Father, which is in Heaven.* Many will say to me in that Day, *Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy Name? And in thy Name have cast out Devils? And in thy Name done many wonderful Works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work Iniquity.* Therefore whosoever beareth these Sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise Man, which built his House upon a Rock: And the Rain descended, and the Floods came, and the Winds blew, and beat upon that House, and it fell not; for it was founded upon a Rock. And every one that beareth these Sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish Man, which built his House upon the Sand: And the Rain descended, and the Floods came, and the Winds blew, and beat upon that House, and it fell; and great was the Fall of it (q). With such Language as this did our Lord end his Discourse on the Mount: Nor was he at all wanting, on all proper Occasions, to inculcate again and again the same Doctrine; and to assure us, that he so expected to be obeyed by us in all States and Conditions whatever, as that he would not dispense with our doing otherwise, though to save our Lives. Whosoever, says he, *will come after me, let him deny himself,*

(q) *Matt. vii. 21--27.*

self, and take up his Cross, and follow me ; for whosoever will save his Life, by disobeying my Gospel, shall lose it ; but whosoever shall lose his Life for my sake, and the Gospel's, the same shall save it (r). Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say (s) ? He that hath my Commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me (t). Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much Fruit : So shall ye be my Disciples. Ye are my Friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you (u). And to the same Purpose did he give Commandment to his Apostles, after his rising again from the Dead : Go ye therefore, says he, and teach all Nations -- teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you (w). And accordingly, This is a faithful Saying, says St. Paul to Titus, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly ; that they which have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good Works : These Things are good, and profitable unto Men (x). It is written, says St. Peter, Be ye holy ; for I am holy (y). And what doth it profit, my Brethren, says St. James, though a Man say he hath Faith, and have not Works ? Can such a worthless Faith save him (z) ? And, He that saith, I know him, says St. John, and keepeth not his Commandments, is a Liar, and the Truth is not in him :

M

But

(r) Mark viii. 34, 35. (s) Luke vi. 46. (t) John xiv. 21. (u) John xv. 8. 14. (w) Matt. xxviii. ult. (x) Titus iii. 8. (y) 1 Peter i. 16. (z) Jam. ii. 14.

But whoſo keepeth his Word, in him verily is the Love of God perfected; hereby do we know that we are in him (a). So abundantly does the Scripture every-where witneſs to this obvious Truth, that Chriſt will be the Author of an eternal Salvation only to them that *obey him (b)*; and that the *Grace of God* does not conſiſt in *diſpenſing* with this, but in graciously accepting ſuch *Degrees* of it, as the preſent State will permit us to give him (c). If it be here asked, But why ſhould this Perfection be thus ſtrongly required, and inſiſted on? it is answered, in brief, That it is both neceſſary for the *Honour of God*, and as a *Preparation* for our enjoying that eternal Life, which is his gracious *Gift*, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord (d). But, having ſaid enough as to the Proof of this, let us now proceed, as was propoſed,

In the FOURTH Place, To ſhew the ſufficient Reason there is for this Perfection, from the Conſideration of the Divine All-ſufficiency. It may indeed be thought, at firſt View, to be a very hard and unreaſonable thing, that we ſhould not be allowed to ſtep out of God's Way for either Riches, or Honours, or Pleaſures; but that we ſhould be ſo tied down to a conſtant Obedience, as not to be indulged in the wilful Neglect of it, either for any
Profit

(a) I *John* ii. 4, 5. (b) *Heb.* v. 9. (c) *Titus* ii. 11--14. (d) *Rom.* vi. ult.

Profit or Advantage, on the one hand, or any Inconvenience or Loss, on the other. And yet it is plain, that God insists upon this ; nor will he make his Covenant with us without it. But let us only consider the great Reason and Encouragement given us, and it will soon appear in a different Light. Let us not stop, I say, at the Consideration of the Conditions required on our Part, but consider also what God has promised on his ; and that is to be our *Almighty* and *All-sufficient* Portion. *I am*, says he, *the Almighty God* : *Therefore walk before me, and be thou perfect*. I don't require you, it is as if he had said, to walk before me in this manner, without sufficient Reason, or to do any thing for my sake, for which I am not able to make you Amends. Was there indeed any real Happiness to be attained by you, that I was not able to give you ; were there any Dangers so great, that I was not sufficient to deliver you from them ; or any Conditions so bad, that I could not afford you sufficient Support and Consolation under them ; there would be some Reason for you then to object against the Strictness of what I require. But as there is nothing Almighty or All-sufficient but me, and as I am both able and ready to engage with you, to be every thing to you, that your Needs shall require, what Reason can there be for your forsaking the Creator, to apply yourself for Help to the Creature, which can do you neither Good nor Evil, but by my

Consent? Am not I the supreme and universal King, that do according to my Pleasure, both in the Armies of Heaven, and among the Inhabitants of the lower World? Am not I the supreme Head over all, that can punish and reward as I please? Have I not both Infinite Wisdom, and Almighty Power? And am I not therefore every way qualified both to choose your Way for you, and to protect and reward you, as I see proper, in it? Only seriously consider what I am able, and what I am willing, to covenant to be to you; and you must soon see, that it is not only your Duty, but your highest Interest, to agree and comply with it; and that it is the wisest Course you can possibly take, if you have any real Concern for your own truest Welfare, to make it your Care in all Things to secure my Favour, and to prefer it to every thing else. It was a seemingly hard Command God gave to *Abraham*, to forsake his Country, and his Father's House, and to leave his Kindred and his Friends behind him (e): And yet how abundantly did God provide for him, raising him Friends even among Strangers, and preserving him from the Hands of his Enemies, because he obeyed his Voice! In like manner, when *Moses* was commanded to apply to *Pharaoh*, he thought it a hard Command, and had many Objections to make to it; and, in particular, that he was not eloquent,

(e) *Gen. xii. 1.*

eloquent, but slow of Speech, and of a slow Tongue. But observe the Answer that God returns to him: *Who hath made Man's Mouth? Or who maketh the Dumb, or the Deaf, or the Seeing, or the Blind? Have not I, the Lord? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy Mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say* (f). As if he had said, What Reason hast thou to make such Objections, when thou knowest who it is that commands thee? If thou art ever so slow of Speech, am not I able to make thee otherwise? Is it not enough that I am with thee? And what was the Issue? His Journey succeeded, as the Lord had said (g); and the Lord brought out his People in a glorious Manner, with a mighty Hand, and with an outstretched Arm (h). So also, when he provided for them in the Wilderness for Forty Years, he thereby displayed his All-sufficiency, in making Provision in the most desolate Places (i): Nor did he less shew his Almightyness, in preserving his Three Servants in the fiery Furnace, and the Prophet *Daniel* in the Lions Den (k). But you will say, perhaps, We none of us doubt, but God is able to do what he pleases; and therefore, would he undertake to protect us at all times, and to preserve us from every Danger, there would be no Reason we should ever depart from him upon

(f) *Exod.* iv. 10, 11, 12.(g) *Exod.* x. 16, &c.(h) *Exod.* xii. 41. and xv. 1--13. (i) *Exod.* xvi. 35, and *Nehem.* ix. 15.(k) *Dan.* chap. iii. and vi.

upon any account whatsoever; but that it is plain, from Experience, that it is often otherwise, and that he often suffers his Servants to be very much abused and ill-treated, and to be loaded with many and tremendous Evils. And it is very true, indeed, that he does so; and yet his Divine Power and All-sufficiency is as great and glorious, and as much, or rather more, for their Advantage, in supporting and bearing them up under such heavy Afflictions and Trials, and in enabling them to be victorious and triumphant over them, as though he should always deliver them out of them. And therefore, if we keep but steadily in the Way of our Duty, as he has promised to be All-sufficient to us one way or other, it signifies little which, since he is able to support and comfort us under the greatest Evils, so as shall be even more than a sufficient amends to us; and has so constantly done so by all his faithful Servants, that they have generally accounted such Days of Affliction, how terrible soever to an Eye of Sense, to be some of the happiest Days of their Lives, as might be easily shewn by a Variety of Instances, were it either needful, or had we time to allow for it. Nor are there even wanting Instances of the weakest and most timorous Tempers, who, on such Occasions as these, have been as bold as Lions, and not only chearfully suffered Imprisonment, but rejoiced at Death, welcomed the Stake, and triumphed

triumphed in the Flames. In short, he has absolutely covenanted to be All-sufficient to all who are his ; nor have there been any who have found him to fail in it, who have but faithfully and humbly adhered to him, and left it to him to care for them. If it be still said, There is no doubt to be made, but that God will take care to do his Part, if we have but Ability enough to do ours ; it is to be taken notice of, for our further Encouragement, that he will be All-sufficient to us also in this ; for it is one Part of his Covenant to give needful Grace, and to bestow his Spirit upon those that ask it. So that if we are not woefully wanting to ourselves, and will but continue to trust him even in all Extremities, his Grace shall at all times be sufficient for us, and we shall be even more than Conquerors by his Grace being with and assisting us. For, *Ask, says our Saviour, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you : For every one that asketh, receiveth ; and he that seeketh, findeth ; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened. If a Son shall ask Bread of any of you that is a Father, will he give him a Stone ? Or, if he ask a Fish, will he for a Fish give him a Serpent ? Or if he shall ask an Egg, will he offer him a Scorpion ? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good Gifts unto your Children ; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit*

to them that ask him (l)? But the most glorious Scenes of all are yet to come: It is not in this Life only that we have hope in God; nor are the Promises of his Covenant confined to the Life that now is: But they that walk before him in Perfection here, shall live for ever with him in Heaven hereafter; where he will for ever protect them from all Kinds of Evil whatever; and be such an exceeding and eternal Reward to them, as neither *Eye has seen, nor Ear of Man has heard, nor can it enter at present into the Heart of Man to conceive* (m). Though therefore *their earthly Houses of these Tabernacles be dissolved*, they have still *a Building of God, an House not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens* (n); and may live in the joyful Expectation of that glorious Time, when *God shall wipe away all Tears from their Eyes; and there shall be no more Death, neither Sorrow, nor Crying, neither any more Pain; but they shall live and reign with God for ever and ever* (o). But, as I persuade myself, there are none of us here that have any Doubt of this, I shall therefore here shut up the doctrinal Part, and immediately proceed, as was proposed in the last Place, to close the Whole with some useful Reflections.

And, *First*, Is the God we serve an All-sufficient God? Then there can be no such thing

(l) *Luke xi. 9--13.* (m) *1 Cor. ii. 9. and 2 Cor. xiii. 4.* (n) *2 Cor. v. 1.* (o) *Rev. xxi. 4. and xxii. 5.*

thing as Merit. For as it is plainly impossible to add any thing to an All-sufficient Being, it must be as plainly impossible, that he should be under any other Obligations to make us Amends for our unprofitable Services, then what arise from the Perfections of his Nature, and the gracious Covenant he has been pleased to make with us. And therefore, though even some well-meaning People, when they hear us pressing them to the Discharge of their Duty, and pleading for the indispensable Necessity of it, are apt to think, that this is being Friends to Merit, from a kind of necessary Connexion, which they inconsiderately imagine between them ; yet is there nothing plainer, upon a just Survey of things, than that our Righteousness cannot extend unto God, or be any-way advantageous to him ; and that we can therefore be but unprofitable Servants, even though we could discharge our Duty without failing at all. For, *Who hath first given to him*, says St. Paul, *and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all Things : To whom be glory for ever ! Amen* (p). And to the same Purpose he tells the *Athenians*, that God is not *worshipped with Mens Hands*, that is, with Gifts and Sacrifices, *as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all Life, and Breath, and all Things* (q). The Meaning of which is not, that God was not to be

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(p) *Rom. xi. ult.*(q) *Acts xvii. 25.*

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worshiped with such Gifts and Sacrifices, as he
had made it our Duty to give, but that he
never needed these upon his own Account,
and therefore did not require them for his own
Advantage. And this even the Friends of
Job knew by the Light of Nature: For, *Can a
Man be profitable, say they, unto God, as he
that is wise may be profitable unto himself? Is
it any Pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art
righteous, on his own Account? Or is it Gain
to him, that thou makest thy Ways perfect? If
thou art righteous, what givest thou him? Or
what receiveth he of thine Hand (r)?* If there-
fore we could be no other than unprofitable
Servants, even after an absolute and legal Per-
fection, it must certainly be the highest Ab-
surdity to pretend to Merit amidst so many
and unavoidable Failings, as, when we have
done all we can, will yet at last cleave to us.
But to go on:

Secondly, Is God All-sufficient, and one
who cannot be advantaged himself? Hence
may we learn then, that all his Commands to
us must be designed to promote our own
Welfare, and be purely calculated for our own
Advantage, and that of our Fellow-Creatures
which are round about us; and that therefore
the serving of God, is in reality rather a
serving ourselves, and each other, than the
being of any real Service or Avail to him.
And

(r) *Job* xxii. 2, 3. and xxxv. 7.

And what greater Incitement can we have to the Service of God? Or what can convince us more effectually, that it is no more than our *reasonable Service* (s), than to consider, that it is purely calculated for our own Advantage, and that whatever we do in it, we do in effect for ourselves? Thus God tells the *Israelites* by his Servant *Moses*; *And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his Ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul; to keep the Commandments of the Lord, and his Statutes, which I command thee this Day for thy Good* (t)? And to the same Purpose by the Prophet *Isaiah*: *Thus saith the Lord thy Redeemer, the Holy one of Israel: I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the Way that thou shouldst go. O that thou hadst hearkened to my Commandments!* Would you know the Reason? Is it that God would have been ever the better for it? There is nothing like this ever said. But, *Then had thy Peace, as it follows, been as a River, and thy Righteousness as the Waves of the Sea; thy Seed also had been as the Sand, and the Offspring of thy Bowels as the Gravel thereof; his Name should not have been cut off, nor destroyed*

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from

(s) *Rom. xii. 1.*(t) *Deut. x. 12, 13.*

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from before me (u). And from hence also may
we learn,

In the *Third* Place, The great Goodness and
Condescension of our heavenly Father, and
the great Concern he has for our Welfare;
in that, though our Obedience can be no-
way advantageous to him, but only to our-
selves, he has yet condescended as earnestly to
woo and importune us to it, as if it were he,
and not we, that were to reap the Benefit. Is
it the Custom of the Rich to court the Poor
to accept of their Bounty; and to be the first
Petitioners for that End and Purpose? Yet
such is the amazing Condescension of our gra-
cious God, as that he has even made himself
a Suitor to us his poor, indigent, and needy
Creatures, that we would be so good as to
partake of his Fulness, and to prepare our-
selves, by his Assistance, to be as happy as
our Natures are capable of, and as his Wis-
dom and Goodness can make us. How un-
like are his Proceedings unto those of Men, and
his Thoughts to human Thoughts! And to
conclude, and shut up all,

In the *Fourth* and last Place, Is God All-
sufficient, both to defend us from Evil, and
to fill and supply us with Good? Then let
Sinners be exhorted from hence, to choose
this God for their Portion, and to enter into

(u) *Isaiah* xlviii. 17, 18, 19.

a solemn Covenant and Engagement with him ; since, if they have him for their Friend, they cannot want any good thing that he in his infinite Wisdom sees convenient for them. If ye have therefore any of you hitherto been blind to your own truest Interest, let me now intreat you to be so no longer ; but as God is ready and willing, through Christ, to enter into Covenant with you, both for Grace and Glory, be not so stupidly foolish as to reject the Offer, but immediately set yourselves with Joy and Thankfulness to comply with it, by a solemn Surrender of yourselves unto him. No longer *spend your Money for that which is not Bread, and your Labour for that which satisfieth not* (w). No longer suffer yourselves to be deceived and deluded by the false Lights of a vicious and disordered Appetite ; but be persuaded at length to open your Eyes, and be wise ; to hearken to the pure Dictates of unbiaſſed Reason, and the unerring Oracles of the Word Divine. And as both Reason and Scripture, with one Voice, proclaim to you, that there is no other Source of Happiness but the Almighty's Favour, see that ye make it your Care to secure it. Be convinced, I say, that in flying your Duty, ye are but running away from your Happiness, and leaving the Substance to pursue the Shadow. And if neither Reason nor Scripture are sufficient to convince you of this, be convinced of it however by

(w) *Isaiah* lv. 2.

by your own Experience. Have ye not been long in the Pursuit of Happiness already, and yet are ye not still as far from finding it as ever? Even when ye have thought yourselves the most sure of it, yet have ye not found yourselves at last disappointed? When ye have thought, that ye had discovered the Seat of it, and with great Pains have arrived at the very Point ye wished for, and where ye imagined, that, if any-where, calm Contentment and Peace had its Residence; yet have ye not found, upon a nearer Survey of it, and after a little Time of Experience and Trial, that it was, after all, but a deceitful Phantom, a specious Bubble, that deceived your Eye-sight, that glittered, and looked fair and glorious, at a Distance; but that, when once laid hold of, vanished into Air, and left you still unsatisfied as ever? What have ye ever yet been able to discover in all the guilty Scenes of a licentious Life, but that there is no solid Happiness to be met with in them? But there is no need to expatiate on a Theme so common, and which is so much the Subject of your own Complaint. The Desire of Happiness is universal, and it is but natural for all to pursue it. Be happy then; it is your Creator's Will. Render yourselves as happy as ye can; ye will but please your Maker in so doing: Who is so far from blaming the Desire of Happiness, that he has, on the contrary, commanded your steady Pursuit of it; and only requires your

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Serm. IV. *of the Gospel Covenant.*

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Observance of his heavenly Laws for that End. Seek therefore Happiness as much as ye please, and let the Desires of it sink deep into your Hearts and Souls ; only be so wise as to seek it in a proper manner, and not to mistake the Shadow for the Thing itself. And as not only Reason and Religion, but your own Experience, all conspire to bear Witness to this obvious Truth, that the Ways of Vice are not the Ways that lead to it ; let it be your Care to regulate your Conduct by it. And accordingly, let the Time past of your Lives be accounted as more than sufficient, in which ye have madly wandered in the Ways of Error, the Ways of Folly, and the Ways of Death ; and turn your Feet at length into the Ways of Truth, the Ways of Wisdom, and of Life eternal. Which God of his Mercy grant, through Jesus Christ ! *Amen.*



S E R-



S E R M O N V.

*Of the Nature of Christianity with
regard to Practice.*

James i. ult.

*Pure Religion, and undefiled, before God and
the Father, is this ; To visit the Fatherless
and Widows in their Affliction, and to keep
himself unspotted from the World.*

THERE is such a peculiar Tendency in
the Christian Scheme to lead us to glo-
rify the Great Creator, by cultivating Peace upon
Earth, and universal good Will among Men,
that it can never be sufficiently lamented, it
has been so little understood and attended to.
How much Mischief has this been often the
Occasion of ! What Confusion has it often-
times made ! And what a terrible Havock of
the human Race ! Whereas, had the Nature
of this most excellent Religion been but rightly
and

and duly considered, all this Mischief and Destruction had been prevented; and Men could never have imagined, that they were doing God good Service, while they were persecuting and destroying his Image. It would have taught them, that the Weapons of the Christian Warfare were not by any means carnal, but spiritual; and that Christianity was not to be propagated by a brutal Force, but by Reason and fair Argument, by the Spirit of God, and by Prayer. It would have taught them too, that Religion did not consist in indifferent Ceremonies, or in trifling and impertinent Opinions; and that the Way to a happy Immortality in the other World did not lie, as they fondly imagined, through the Fires of a blind and persecuting Zeal for the Propagation and Promotion of a Party, but in the Performance of those greater and those weightier Matters, the perfecting our Souls in Purity and Holiness, the worshiping the one true God in and through the one true Mediator; and in Acts of Love and Benevolence, as far as it lies in our Power, both to the Souls and Bodies of our Fellow-Creatures; in ceasing to do Evil, and learning to do well; and in turning from Sin and Satan, to the living God: And that *the Wisdom that is from above is not furious, outrageous, and implacable, but first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of Mercy and good Fruits, with-*

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out Partiality, and without Hypocrisy (a):
That the Kingdom of God, as St. Paul tells us,
is not Meat and Drink, but Righteousness, and
Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost (b): And, in
a word, that pure Religion, and undefiled, before
God and the Father, does not consist in per-
secuting, but in relieving, the Fatherless and
Widows, in Works of the most disinterested
and most generous Kindness, and in keeping
ourselves unspotted from the World.

But it is far from being the only Advantage
that would have been attendant on such a Be-
haviour, that it would merely have prevented
us from destroying each other; it would also
have firmly united us in the Bands of Charity;
and Righteousness, and Peace, and Joy in the
Holy Ghost, universal Peace, and universal
Holiness, would have been universally pur-
sued and promoted: All Jarrings and Con-
tentions about Ceremonies and Trifles had lain
still; and Reviling, and calling Names, upon
account of some small Differences in Opinion,
would never have come into Fashion: All
lesser Denominations would have been swal-
lowed up in the Denomination of *Christian*;
nor would there have been any other Di-
stinctions made use of, than those of *real*, and
nominal Professors; those that lived and acted
agreeably to their Profession, and those that did
not so: Men had never either disclaimed Practice,
as a principal Part of their Religion, or looked
upon

(a) *James* iii. 17.

(b) *Rom.* xiv. 17.

upon the Practice of the great Duties of Morality, as the less weighty Parts of their Practice ; but would have been guided and influenced by the Doctrine here laid down in the Text, and which I shall now lay as the Basis and Foundation of the ensuing Discourse; to wit, *That pure Religion is an active and practical Thing, and such as is always productive of pure and benevolent Actions.*

In the further Prosecution of which, I shall take this following Method ; viz.

FIRST, Prove the Truth of this Assertion, that Religion is an active and practical Thing.

SECONDLY, Shew you what Sort of a Practice it is that our most holy Religion requires.

THIRDLY, What Place Purity and Charity have in such a Practice ; and that they are highly important and essential Parts of it.

After which, I shall shut up all, in the LAST Place, with some easy and useful Reflections.

And, FIRST, I am to prove to you the Truth of this Assertion, that Religion is an active and practical Thing ; not that Faith and Speculation are not to be looked upon as necessary and essential Parts of it ; but that it does not consist in an idle, but an active Faith, and such as is always productive of a due Obedience ; or, to use the Words of our Apostle in a following Chapter, that, *As the Body without the Spirit is dead, so Faith*

100 *Of the Nature of Christianity* Serm. V.
without Works is dead also (c). And, indeed,
 what Article is there of our holy Faith, which,
 as far as relates to the Assent of the Understand-
 ing, may not be believed and assented to by
 the veriest Reprobate? Will you say then,
 that Religion, for Instance, consists in the Be-
 lief of a God? The Belief of a God, no doubt,
 is so absolutely necessary to Religion, that
 there can be no such thing as Religion without
 it. But does Religion consist in the bare Be-
 lief of this, which even *the Devils* themselves
believe, and tremble (d)? Or in worshiping,
 honouring, and faithfully obeying him, which
 is not mere Speculation, but Practice? Or
 will you say, that Religion consists in believing
 that *Jesus* is the true *Messiah*? This is, indeed,
 the Foundation and Ground-work of all Chri-
 stianity; but, *Why call ye me, Lord, Lord,*
says our Redeemer and Saviour himself, and do
not the Things which I say (e)? Or will you
 have it, that Religion consists in a right Know-
 ledge and Understanding of your Master's Will,
 and what it is, which he requires from you?
 This is certainly necessary, as previous to a
 religious Compliance with it; but if not at-
 tended with this, will be so far from being of
 any Advantage to you, that it will only tend
 to aggravate your Condemnation (f). Or
 will you have it, that it consists, in the last
 place, in trusting in Christ as your Saviour?
 This

(c) *Jam. ii. ult.*
 vi. 46.

(d) *Jam. ii. 19.*
 (f) *Luke xii. 47.*

(e) *Luke*

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This is undoubtedly a necessary Consequence of a true and a cordial Belief in him; but then, in order to render it a true Trust in *Christ*, it must of Necessity have *his Gospel* for its Rule and Guide, which has no-where taught us to trust to his Grace, at the same time that we break his Commandments; but has, on the contrary, expressly assured us, that *not every one that saith unto him, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doeth the Will of his Father, which is in Heaven* (g): And that *He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his Commandments, is a Liar, and the Truth is not in him* (h). But as this is a Truth so apparent from Reason, and at the same time so clearly attested in almost every Page of Scripture, and in a particular Manner in this Epistle of *James*, which seems to have been written almost solely for this very End, I shall therefore forbear to enlarge on the Proof of this Point any further. I proceed then, as was proposed,

In the SECOND Place, To shew you what Sort of a Practice it is that our most holy Religion requires. And, to this End, it will be proper for us to consider the Four following Things; *viz.* That it must be evangelical with regard to the Matter of it; That it must be sincere, and not hypocritical; That it must be universal, with regard to the Extent of it; and,

(g) *Matt.* vii. 21. (h) *1 John* ii. 4.

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and, lastly, That it must be constant and permanent in all Variety of States and Conditions, Of each of which, God willing, in their proper Order.

And, *First*, It is absolutely necessary to a Christian Practice, that it be *evangelical* with regard to the *Matter* of it; or that it have the Gospel of Christ for its Rule. For as all Religion is a Conformity to some Rule or Law, so the Christian Religion in particular consists in this, *to wit*, a conscientious Obedience to the Laws of God, as they are delivered by Christ in his *Gospel*. It is this, and this only, which constitutes *Christian Religion*; and so far only as this is adhered to, can our Obedience be said to be *Christian*. If we therefore lay a Stress upon any thing, which the Gospel has nowhere commanded; as upon paying a Visit, for Example, to the *Holy Land*; or upon taking some other tedious and laborious Pilgrimage; we plainly deviate in this Matter from the sacred Standard, and fall from Religion into Superstition; and, as the Gospel has no-where required any such Service as this at our Hands, it can therefore be no Part of the Christian Religion, nor can we, with any Propriety, be said to serve Christ in so doing. But, if we are so far irregular as to place our Religion in that, which the Gospel of Christ has expressly forbidden us; if we bow ourselves down, and worship graven
Images,

Images, or multiply our Objects of religious Worship, not only without, but against his Commandment; if we pretend to serve God, by abusing and ill-treating our Brother, whom he has expressly commanded us to love and cherish; if we furiously set ourselves to destroy those *Tares*, which our Lord has commanded us to let alone (*i*); or take upon us to alter or reverse those Laws, which he has expressly commanded us to observe, and walk by; we are not only superstitious, but unchristian, and even inhuman; and are so far from being the Servants either of God or Christ, that we are in open Rebellion to both (*k*). If we are therefore desirous to recommend ourselves as faithful Servants, and that our Lord should reward us as such at his glorious Coming, we must faithfully adhere to the Rules which he has given us, and not go about to substitute others in their room and stead; which is a Liberty he has no-where allowed of: We must study his Gospel for that End and Purpose, and order all our Ways according to his Word: We must not go about to adulterate his Religion by our own Inventions, or to christen our own Fooleries by that sacred and venerable Name; but, as we call him our Lord, must have a steady regard to his Laws, and make it our care *to observe all things, whatsoever he has commanded us* (*l*). But, to go on:

Secondly,

(*i*) *Matt. xiii. 24--30.*

(*k*) *2 John Ver. 9.*

(*l*) *Matt. xxviii. ult.*

Secondly, It is also absolutely necessary to a Christian Practice, that it be *sincere*, and not *hypocritical*. It must not be feigned and counterfeit, but real and true. It must not be carried on in Hypocrisy for any worldly or sinister Ends, but from a religious Principle of Obedience to our God and Saviour: We must not only be religious in Word, but also in Thought, and in Deed; in secret, as well as in public; and in the Closet, as well as the Church. In short, we must not only be Christians in Profession, and outward Appearance, but in the Sincerity of our Hearts, and in Truth: Must act as those that in reality serve the Lord Christ, and that are labouring in good Earnest for the everlasting Salvation of their Souls. The Aims of the true Christian are always above this World; and therefore he endeavours to have his Inside and his Outside to be all of a Piece, and is more solicitous to be approved of by God, than to be carested and applauded by Men: Whereas the Devotion of the Hypocrite, on the other hand, how specious soever as to outward Appearance, is not so much paid to God, as it is to his Fellow-Creatures; nor is he solicitous to be really religious, but only to appear and seem so. He does not so much concern himself with another World, as with the Honours and Profits of this; and only affects to appear in a religious Garb, that he may sin the more securely under that Disguise; that, by
 appearing

appearing like an Angel *without*, he may the better conceal the Devil that lurks *within*; and, by acting the Saint when Abroad, and at Church, may, with the less Suspicion, act the Sinner in his Shop, and at Home. But let not such be deceived, *God is not* thus to be mocked; for *whatsoever a Man soweth, that shall he also reap* (m). The God that made us can easily see what is in us, can easily discern true Holiness from its Shadow, nor can we deceive him by looking demurely. He can easily discern the Difference between lifting up the Eyes, and lifting up the Heart; and will punish such Hypocrisy hereafter in a severe and exemplary Manner (n). If therefore Religion be evil, let us not set ourselves at all to pretend to it: But, if good, let us heartily embrace it, and let us act with Sincerity in it. And to this End let us always remember, that the Lord our God is one that *searches the Heart, and the Reins, even to give every Man according to his Ways, and according to the Fruit of his Doings* (o): That he is one that sees us where-ever we go, and that is privy to all that we do; one to whom *the Night even shines as the Day, and the Darknes, and the Light*, are the same (p); and that he will hereafter *bring every Work into Judgment, with every secret Thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil* (q). And as it is thus ab-

P solutely

(m) Gal. vi. 7. (n) Matt. xxiv. ult. (o) Jeremiah xvii. 10. (p) Psalm cxxxix. 1--12. (q) Eccles. xii. ult.

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solutely necessary to a Christian Practice, that
it be sincere, and not hypocritical; so is it also
essential,

In the *Third Place*, That it be *universal*
with regard to the *Extent* of it; or that there
be a sincere Respect to every known Com-
mandment. For, *Then shall I not be ashamed*,
says the Psalmist, *when I have Respect unto all*
thy Commandments (r). And, *whosoever shall keep*
the whole Law, says the Apostle James, *and yet*
wilfully and knowingly offend in one Point, he is
guilty of all. For he that said, *Do not commit*
Adultery, said also, *Do not kill*. Now, if thou
commit no Adultery, yet, if thou kill, thou art
become a *Transgressor of the Law* (s). And
the same may be said of every other Instance:
The same God who has forbidden us to rob or
steal, has also equally forbidden us to swear
or lye. The very self-same Law, or, if you
had rather have it so expressed, the same
Gospel, that requires Justice and Charity with
regard to Men, requires also Piety and Devo-
tion with regard to God, and Sobriety and
Temperance with regard to ourselves. Though
therefore we should be ever so just and cha-
ritable with regard to Men, yet if we are not
also pious and devout; or, on the other hand,
ever so remarkably devout and pious, yet if
we are not also truly just and good, truly sober
and temperate, and pure and chaste; our Obe-
dience is lame and defective, and our Preten-
fions

(r) *Psalms* cxix. 6.

(s) *James* ii. 10, 11.

sions to Religion are vain. Human Frailties, and Sins of Infirmary, are, no doubt of it, common to all Men: But if, notwithstanding our Knowledge of a plain Command, we yet wilfully and deliberately still continue to live in the Breach of it, how dwelleth the Fear of God in us? Can we wilfully and knowingly disobey him, and yet pretend, notwithstanding, to fear him? Or can we allowedly break any of his known Commandments, and yet lay claim to the Promises to those that keep them? Does any Man therefore pretend to be a religious Man, that is either a churlish Husband, or a spiteful and ill-natured Neighbour? Does any Woman pretend to be a religious Woman, that is either a careless Mother, or a false or undutiful Wife? In a Word, Are there any who pretend, that the Spirit witnesses with their Spirits, that they are born of God, while they allow themselves in any known Vices, or in the Omission of any known Duties, either with regard to God, their Neighbours, or themselves? Let them but give themselves the Trouble to consult the Scriptures, and they must soon be convinced, the Spirit witnesses different things; and that as *whosoever abideth in him*, in this Sense, *sinneeth not*; so, *whosoever thus sinneeth, hath not seen him, neither known him* (t). It remains to be added,

P 2

In

(t) 1 John iii. 6.

In the *Fourth* and last Place, That it is also further essential to a Christian Practice, that it be *constant* and *permanent* in all Variety of *States* and *Conditions*. For, as it is not enough that we yield Obedience only to some Commandments, whilst we at the same time wilfully disregard the rest of them; so neither is it sufficient to be obedient only at certain Seasons, and when we may have little or no Temptation to the contrary; but a due Sense of Religion must run through the Whole of our Conduct, and in spite of all Temptations of whatever Kind. The Favour of God must be the principal thing we pursue; and the approving ourselves to him, be our constant and principal Aim; nor must we think it much to run counter to our worldly Interest, if the Case be so, that it cannot be consulted but by acting unsuitably to our Christian Duty. He is but little acquainted with the Christian Laws, who does not know it to be impossible to *serve God and Mammon* (u); and that he that would so *fight the good Fight of Faith*, as to *lay hold on eternal Life* (w), must take care so to fight, that he may overcome. For, *Whatsoever is born of God*, says the Apostle *John*, *overcometh the World*; and, *If any Man so love the World*, as to suffer it to overcome him, the same Apostle assures us, *the Love of the Father is not in him* (x). It is
not

(u) *Matt.* vi. 24. (w) *1 Tim.* vi. 12. (x) *1 John* v. 4. and ii. 15.

not enough therefore to be religious, while our Religion consists with our Interest, while we can walk on smoothly in a prosperous Sunshine, and are held in Honour and Esteem for being so ; but we must also dare to be religious in more trying Seasons, and to face, if needful, the most threatening Storms, Disgrace, and Poverty, and Death itself. If there are any yet doubtful of the Truth of this, let me but request their Attention to the positive Words of that Judge, at whose Bar we must all of us stand ; and who expressly asserts it in the following Terms: *He that loveth Father or Mother more than me, is not worthy of me : And he that loveth Son or Daughter more than me, is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his Life, shall lose it ; and he that loseth his Life for my sake, shall find it (y).* And again ; *If any Man come to me, and hate not his Father, and Mother, and Wife, and Children, and Brethren, and Sisters, yea and his own Life also, he cannot be my Disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his Cross, and come after me, cannot be my Disciple. And again ; Whosoever he be of you, that, whensoever I shall call him to it, forsaketh not all he hath, he cannot be my Disciple. Salt is good: But if the Salt have lost his Savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned ? It is neither fit for the Land, nor*

yet

(y) *Matt. x. 37, 38, 39.*

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yet for the *Dunghil*; but Men cast it out:
He that hath Ears to hear, let him hear (z).
Nor did he only teach this Doctrine while he
lived on Earth, but also since his Ascension to
the Right-hand of God in the Heavens, as
you may see at your Leisure in every one of
those Seven Epistles that *John* was ordered to
write to the *Asiatic Churches* (a). As we are
therefore solicitous to behave ourselves rightly
in the Christian Warfare, we must take care
so to fight, that we may gain the Victory;
and that neither *Death, nor Life, nor Angels,*
nor Principalities, nor Powers, nor Things
present, nor Things to come, nor Height, nor
Depth, nor any other Creature, may be able
to separate us from the Love of God, which is
in Christ *Jesus our Lord* (b). Not that our
State is to be judged of by here-and-there a
particular Case; for the Flesh may sometimes
overcome the Spirit: But yet the Victory, as
to the general, must be either on the Side of
the Spirit, and we must take care to be faithful,
by the Assistance of God, unto *Death*, or we
can have no Right to the Promise of the
Crown of Life (c). For thus saith he that sits
upon the Throne, *He that overcometh shall*
inherit all Things, and I will be his God, and
he shall be my Son. But the *Fearful and Unbe-*
lieving, and the Abominable, and Murderers,
and Whoremongers, and Sorcerers, and all
Liars,

(z) *Luke* xiv. 26, 27. 33, 34, 35. (a) *Rev.* Chap.
ii. iii. (b) *Rom.* viii. ult. (c) *Rev.* ii. 10.

Serm. V. *with regard to Practice.* III

Liars, shall have their Part in the Lake which burneth with Fire and Brimstone; which is the second Death (d). But let this suffice as to the Nature of that general Practice which our most holy Religion requires, and let me now proceed, as was proposed,

In the THIRD Place, To shew what Place Purity and Charity have in such a Practice; and that they are highly important and essential Parts of it. And here, after having just premised, that the Love of our adorable Creator is to be deservedly reckoned as the *First Commandment (e)*, and as what is indeed the Root and Principle of all other Virtues; there is no Man who knows any thing of the true Nature and Order of Things, but must allow these in our Text to be the next in Dignity, and to be indeed no other than such genuine Fruits of the Love of God being really within us, that he who has not the one, can but vainly pretend to the other. But, say I these things only as a Man? Do not the Scriptures say also the same? When the *Psalmist* asks the Question, *Who shall ascend into the Hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy Place?* he immediately answers it in the following Words: *He that bath clean Hands, and a pure Heart; who bath not lift up his Soul unto Vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.*

He

(d) *Rev.* xxi. 7, 8.
Mark xii. 28, 29, 30.

(e) *Matt.* xxii. 35--38. and

110 *Of the Nature of Christianity* Serm. V.
yet for the Dunghil; but Men cast it out:
He that hath Ears to hear, let him hear (z).
Nor did he only teach this Doctrine while he
lived on Earth, but also since his Ascension to
the Right-hand of God in the Heavens, as
you may see at your Leisure in every one of
those Seven Epistles that *John* was ordered to
write to the *Asiatic Churches* (a). As we are
therefore solicitous to behave ourselves rightly
in the Christian Warfare, we must take care
so to fight, that we may gain the Victory;
and that neither Death, nor Life, nor Angels,
nor Principalities, nor Powers, nor Things
present, nor Things to come, nor Height, nor
Depth, nor any other Creature, may be able
to separate us from the Love of God, which is
in Christ Jesus our Lord (b). Not that our
State is to be judged of by here-and-there a
particular Case; for the Flesh may sometimes
overcome the Spirit: But yet the Victory, as
to the general, must be either on the Side of
the Spirit, and we must take care to be faithful,
by the Assistance of God, unto Death, or we
can have no Right to the Promise of the
Crown of Life (c). For thus saith he that sits
upon the Throne, *He that overcometh shall*
inherit all Things, and I will be his God, and
he shall be my Son. But the Fearful and Unbe-
lieving, and the Abominable, and Murderers,
and Whoremongers, and Sorcerers, and all
Liars,

(z) *Luke* xiv. 26, 27. 33, 34, 35. (a) *Rev.* Chap.
ii. iii. (b) *Rom.* viii. ult. (c) *Rev.* ii. 10.

Liars, shall have their Part in the Lake which burneth with Fire and Brimstone; which is the second Death (d). But let this suffice as to the Nature of that general Practice which our most holy Religion requires, and let me now proceed, as was proposed,

In the THIRD Place, To shew what Place Purity and Charity have in such a Practice; and that they are highly important and essential Parts of it. And here, after having just premised, that the Love of our adorable Creator is to be deservedly reckoned as the *First Commandment (e)*, and as what is indeed the Root and Principle of all other Virtues; there is no Man who knows any thing of the true Nature and Order of Things, but must allow these in our Text to be the next in Dignity, and to be indeed no other than such genuine Fruits of the Love of God being really within us, that he who has not the one, can but vainly pretend to the other. But, say I these things only as a Man? Do not the Scriptures say also the same? When the *Psalmist* asks the Question, *Who shall ascend into the Hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy Place?* he immediately answers it in the following Words: *He that hath clean Hands, and a pure Heart; who hath not lifted up his Soul unto Vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.*

He

(d) *Rev.* xxi. 7, 8.
Mark xii. 28, 29, 30.

(e) *Matt.* xxii. 35--38. and

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He shall receive the Blessing from the Lord,
and Righteousness from the God of his Salva-
tion (f). And when our Lord opened his
Mouth in pronouncing Blessings on several
Characters, he pronounced this Blessing on
the Pure in Heart, that they should assuredly
come to *see God (g)*. St. Paul earnestly ex-
horts the *Philippians*, *If there be any Virtue,*
or if there be any Praise, that they would
make it their Care to think on *whatsoever*
Things are pure (h); and, having Occasion, in
his Epistle to *Titus*, to mention our Lord's
giving himself for us, he subjoins, that he did
it for this very Purpose, *That he might redeem*
us from all our Iniquity, and purify us unto
himself for a peculiar People (i). St. Peter,
speaking to the Apostles at *Jerusalem* con-
cerning the Faith which accompanies Salva-
tion, mentions its *purifying the Heart*, as an
essential Property (*k*); and beseeches those to
whom he wrote his Epistles, in a very earnest
and affectionate Manner, *to abstain from fleshly*
Lusts, which war against the Soul (l). St.
James, describing *the Wisdom that is from*
above, tells us, that it is *first pure, then peace-*
able, gentle, and so on (m). And St. *John*,
speaking of the Hope of the Righteous, with
regard to that unspeakable Glory that shall be
conferred upon them at our Lord's Appearing,
imme-

(f) *Psalms* xxiv. 3, 4, 5. (g) *Matt.* v. 8. (h) *Philipp.*
iv. 8. (i) *Titus* ii. 14. (k) *Acts* xv. 9. (l) *1 Peter*
ii. 11. (m) *James* iii. 17.

immediately adds, *And every Man that hath this Hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure (o).* And it is, we know, expressly declared concerning the *new Jerusalem*, that *there shall in no-wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh Abomination—but they which are written in the Lamb's Book of Life (p).* Yea, the Scriptures hardly ever make mention of such Sins as exclude from Salvation, but that Impurity or Sensuality is found one amongst them; which is so often, so expressly, and severely threatened, that they who know any thing of their Bibles must often, no doubt, have observed it. And as for the great Virtue of Benevolence and doing Good, it is so much every-where insisted on through the Whole of Scripture, that it is, in a manner, needless to say much about it. It is with a special Reference to this very Grace, that our Lord requires us to be perfect, *even as our Father, which is in Heaven, is perfect (q).* And, having declared the Love of God to be the First Commandment, he immediately adds, *And the Second is like; namely his, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thyself: There is none other Commandment greater than these (r).* It is by this that all Men are to know that we are his Disciples, *if we have Love one for another (s).* And when he represents to us the Manner of the

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future

(o) 1 John iii. 3. (p) Rev. xxi. ult. (q) Matt. v. ult. &c. (r) Mark xii. 31. (s) John xiii. 35.

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 future Judgment, he makes this the Subject
 of the grand Inquiry (t). St. Paul prefers it
 both to *Faith* and *Hope* (u); and exhorts us,
above all Things, that we put on *Charity* (w).
 And it is, in short, of such Importance and Ne-
 cessity in the Christian Life, that all Pretences
 to Religion are in vain without it. For *who*
hath this World's Good, says the Apostle John,
and seeth his Brother have Need, and shutteth
up his Bowels of Compassion from him, how
dwelleth the Love of God in him (x)? And
 again; *He that loveth not, knoweth not God;*
for God is Love.—*If a Man say, I love God,*
and hateth his Brother, he is a Liar; for he
that loveth not his Brother, whom he hath seen,
how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?
And this Commandment have we from him, that
he who loveth God, love his Brother also (y).
 But it is needless to enlarge further on so plain
 a Point. Let us proceed therefore, as was pro-
 posed,

In the LAST Place, To shut up the Whole
 with some easy and useful Reflections.

And *First*, Hence may we learn to judge of
 our Condition, whether we are truly religious,
 or no. And here the Question is not so much
 what we believe, or to which of those *Seets*
 we

(t) *Matt.* xxv. 31, &c. (u) *1 Cor.* xiii. ult.
 (w) *Coloss.* iii. 14. (x) *1 John* iii. 17. (y) *1 John* iv.
 8. 20, 21.

we are joined, into which *Christendom* is so unhappily divided, as whether we answer the Direction given in our Text, *to visit the Fatherless and Widows in their Affliction, and to keep ourselves unspotted from the World.* Let us then seriously ask ourselves, Is this our Case? It is to be hoped, that we are all of us at least so far Christians, as to believe in *Jesus* as the true *Messiah*, the Son of God, and Saviour of the World. Let us then seriously ask ourselves, What Effect this our Faith has upon us? Does it avail to purify our Hearts and Lives? Does it lead us to *cleanse ourselves from all Filthiness of the Flesh and Spirit*, and to be *perfecting Holiness in the Fear of God* (z)? Do we suffer ourselves to be contented with a bare Profession? Or are we really solicitous to behave agreeably? Have we that Purity and Benevolence which the holy Gospel of our Saviour requires? Are we religiously careful to maintain good Works (a)? And, as we have Opportunity and Ability, to do Good to all Men (b)? Have we learnt of our Lord to be meek and lowly in Heart (c)? Are we cloathed and adorned, as the Elect of God, with Bowels of Mercy, Tenderness, and Compassion (d)? Do we seek the Kingdom of God, and his Righteousness, in the first and principal Place (e)? And are we careful

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to

(z) 2 Cor. vii. 1. (a) Titus iii. 8. (b) Gal. vi. 10.
(c) Matt. xi. 29. (d) Col. iii. 12. (e) Matt. vi. 33.

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to observe all Things whatsoever our Lord
has commanded us (*f*)? Does the chief of
our Religion lie in Meats and Drinks, in Party-
Zeal, Disputes, and useless Ceremonies; or
in Righteousness, and Peace, and Joy, in the
Holy Ghost (*g*), in serious Piety, and useful
Goodness? Are we, in short, really careful to
shun every Vice, and to adhere with Steadi-
ness to the Cause of Virtue? Is it our serious
Endeavour to obey God's Laws; and are we
heartily sorry whenever we break or transgress
them? Are we solicitous, above all things, to
secure his Favour; and do we really prefer it
to all other things? Do we oblige our Interest
to give way to Duty, or force our Duty, on
the other hand, to give way to that? If the
latter of these be the Case, our Religion is
lame and defective, nor is the true Love of
the Father within us: But, if we can sin-
cerely subscribe to the former, and are con-
scious, that we value and prefer our Duty be-
fore all vicious Pleasure, and all worldly In-
terest; we may bid our Souls be of good
Chear, and may rejoice in Hope of the Glory
of God; and as we allow ourselves in the
Practice of no wilful Sins, may assure our-
selves of Indulgence for our Imperfections,
and of being everlastingly happy by his Grace
hereafter, to whom we have made it our En-
deavour to conform whilst here. Again,

Se-

(*f*) *Matt. xxviii. ult.*

(*g*) *Rom. xiv. 17.*

Secondly, Hence also may we learn the Impiety of that corrupt Church, who proudly styles herself the Holy Catholic, and will allow of no Salvation but within her Pales; who is so far from regulating her Conduct by the Laws of Christ, that she is obliged to conceal them, that her Irregularities be not discovered; who has set up many Mediators of her own Invention, and expressly contrary to divine Commandment; who encourages Impurity by profuse Indulgences; who wallows in Filthiness, and is drunk with Blood; whose very Mercy is Cruelty, and whose pretended Benevolence is the most inhuman and brutal Barbarity. It would too much resemble Popery in *us*, to exclude all her Votaries from the Hopes of Mercy; but it at the same time certainly concerns us to avoid her Errors, and to withdraw ourselves from her, that we be not *Partakers of her Sins*, and that we do not *receive of her Plagues* (b). And, to conclude this Subject,

In the *Third* and *last* Place, Hence may we learn also the Absurdity of implicit Faith, the Right and Necessity of private Judgment, and of an universal Toleration in such Affairs as relate to Religion. For as it is essentially necessary to a Christian Practice, that it be evangelical with regard to the Matter, and have the Gospel of Christ for its Rule; so he that follows
impli-

(b) Rev. xviii. 4.

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implicitly the Faith of others, though he may conform his Practice unto their Directions, yet may he greatly deviate from the sacred Standard. And as there is this Danger in submitting to the Faith of others, so is it equally unchristian to compel others to submit to our own; it being as necessary and essential to a Christian Practice, that it be according to the Dictates of Mens own Convictions, as that they judge for themselves, and take the Gospel of Christ for their Rule. If we are therefore solicitous to behave ourselves as becomes the Gospel, and to adorn the holy Doctrine of God, and our Saviour, in all things, we must make that the Standard of our Faith and Practice; and as we must be guided in all things by our own Convictions, and not by those of any other for us, so the very same Liberty that we take ourselves, we must be equally willing to indulge to others; as considering, that the Unity of the Christian Church does not so much consist in an Uniformity of Faith in all Things, as in an *Unity of Spirit in the Bond of Peace* (i); and as remembring, that the Religion of Jesus is a Religion of Love and Good-will, of the most perfect Purity, and sublime Benevolence; that is more averse to nothing than to Rage and Malice, or that insists not more on any thing than Love, and Peace, and kind Beneficence,
like

(i) *Ephes.* iv. 3.

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like that of Heaven. Now, unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the Presence of his Glory, with exceeding Joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be Glory and Majesty, Dominion and Power, both now, and for ever. Amen (k)!

(k) Jude, Ver. 24, 25.



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S E R M O N VI.

The serving God a reasonable Service.

Rom. xii. 1.

I beseech you therefore, Brethren, by the Mercies of God, that ye present your Bodies a living Sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable Service.

THE Apostle, in the foregoing Part of this Epistle, having shewn the Necessity of *the Law of Faith* for the Justification both of *Jews* and *Gentiles*, who, having all of them broken their respective Laws, could therefore have no plain Hopes of Justification by them ; and having also proved against the *Jews*, that there was nothing inconsistent with the Promise God had made to *Abraham*, in his rejecting their Nation for their Unbelief, and electing the penitent and believing *Gentiles* for his peculiar People, in their room and
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stead ; proceeds at length in this Chapter to conclude the Whole, as his Method is in all his other Epistles, with some useful Instructions for the Christian Life ; which he here enforces from the Consideration of those many Mercies, which in the Grace of the Gospel are bestowed upon us : *I beseech you therefore, Brethren,* says the Apostle, *by the Mercies of God,* of that God who has now called you to be his Church and People, who has sent his Son into the World to die for you, and who has declared these glad Tidings of Salvation to you, *that ye present your Bodies a living Sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God,* which is *your reasonable Service*. It is the latter Part of these Words that I shall chiefly speak to ; namely, that the Service of God is no other than a *reasonable Service* ; a Subject highly worthy of our Consideration, and which can at no time be improper or unseasonable, as it has the most direct Tendency to endear Religion, and to recommend its Precepts to a sinful World, and so to accomplish that End to which the whole Gospel leads ; that, being dead to Sin, we should henceforth live unto God, through *Jesus Christ* our Lord. The Point then to be insisted on is briefly this ; that, in conforming our Conduct to the Laws of God, we do but follow the Dictates of the purest Reason. In the further Prosecution of which useful Subject, I shall not take up any of your Time, either by going about to de-

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monstrate, that there is a God, or that the Christian Religion is from God ; but I shall consider myself as speaking to a Christian Audience, and who are sufficiently settled in these Points already ; and shall therefore begin with observing,

In the FIRST Place, That the Service of God must appear to be a reasonable Service, as it consists in Obedience to the best of Beings, and whom we are under the strongest Obligations to obey in all Things ; since it is in him that we live, and move, and have our Being, and from him that we have received every thing that we are and have. Is it not he, who first formed us these Bodies, and gave us these our Souls ? Is it not he, who has preserved us, and sustained us in Life, until now ? Is it not purely to his Goodness, and divine Benevolence, that we owe all the Mercies which we have, or hope for ? Are we not all the Creatures of his sovereign Power, and intirely dependent on his Will and Pleasure, both with regard to our Lives, and every Comfort of them ? To whom therefore should we offer up our Prayers and Praises, but to that God in whose Hand our Life is ? Or to whom can all our Service be so justly due ? Can there be any thing more consistent with the Rules of Reason, than that we should highly honour this our heavenly Father ? Love him as our Creator, and our Benefactor ?

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And sincerely obey him as our rightful Governor? That we should chearfully act the Parts which he has set us, and employ all our Lives and Powers in his Service? Can there, I say, be any thing more reasonable, or more justly due, from Creatures, such as we, to a benign Creator, than that with humble Prayers we should invoke his Favour? With filial Affections strive to do his Pleasure? Thank him with grateful Hearts for all his Goodness towards us? And, in short, readily pay him all those proper Honours, which result from his Perfections, and Relation to us, both as the God who made, and by his Son redeemed us, and whose chief End in all things is his Creatures Good? But, to go on:

SECONDLY, The Service of God must also appear to be a reasonable Service, as it is greatly conducive to our Health of Body, and to the preserving and lengthening of our temporal Lives. For, *The Fear of the Lord*, says the wise Solomon, *prolongeth Days*—and *is a Fountain of Life, to depart from the Snares of Death* (a). Weak Constitutions will indeed be weak, notwithstanding any Course of Life whatever; nor will Religion preserve us either from going the Way of all Flesh, or from those previous Diseases that commonly force us into it: But though it will not save us from being sometimes sick, yet will it still

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preserve

(a) *Prov. x. 27. and xiv. 27.*

preserve us from being sick so often, and intirely free us too from many Evils, which a more licentious Conduct often brings Men under. For so long as Peace and Quietness of Mind tend more to Health than Discontent and Passion; so long as Sobriety and Temperance continue to be more healthful than Excess and Drunkenness; so long as Purity and Chastity are more healthy than Lust and Debauchery; so long must it be the Tendency of a virtuous Practice to keep us free from many foul Disorders, and that not only tend to imbitter all the Sweets of Life, but to hurry on our Death by swift Advances. So that should we take up the Words of the Psalmist, *What Man is he that desireth Life, and loveth many Days, that he may see Good?* we could not give better Advice than he has done for us; *Keep thy Tongue from Evil, and thy Lips from speaking Guile. Depart from Evil, and do Good: Seek Peace, and pursue it* (b). If we are therefore solicitous for the Welfare of these mortal Bodies, it is impossible for us to take a better Method, than to offer them up to God as *living Sacrifices*; or, as the same Apostle expresses it in another Passage, to *yield our Members as Instruments of Righteousness to God* (c). For what else do the Luxurious and Intemperate, but ruin themselves as fast as they can? Or to what End tends the Practice of the Debauchee, but to fill

(b) *Psalm xxxiv. 12, 13, 14.* (c) *Rom. vi. 13.*

fill his Bones with Rottenness, and his Life with Pain, and to bring him down with Shame to an untimely Grave? But,

THIRDLY, The Service of God must also appear to be a reasonable Service, as it has a very manifest Influence on our Peace of Mind. For, *Great Peace*, says the Psalmist, *have they which love thy Law; and nothing shall offend them* (d). It is its natural Tendency to calm the Soul, to still the Tumult of disordered Passions, and hush the Cries of the awakened Conscience: Whereas the direct Tendency of Vice, on the other hand, is only to ruffle and unhinge the Mind, and to banish true Peace and Quietness from our Breasts, which can be no-where found but in the Paths of Virtue. For it is the Nature of Wickedness to create Uneasiness, and to fill the Soul with terrible Forebodings. They may indeed lie dormant in a pleasant Sun-shine, and while the Prospect of Danger is only beheld from afar; but if the Clouds, tho' but in Fancy, blacken, and seem to threaten an approaching Storm, the guilty Mind is presently alarmed, and all the Soul is filled with ghastly Terrors. *There is no Peace, saith my God, to the Wicked* (e). And, indeed, what Peace can we suppose in such, who have so many Evils staring in their Faces, whose Consciences seldom speak but to accuse them, and to affright and terrify them

(d) *Psalm cxix. 165.*(e) *Isaiah lvii. ult.*

them with the Wrath of Heaven, and the tremendous Vengeance of an angry God? And if, amidst the Variety of their vain Delights, they prevail upon their Consciences to be at quiet, which it is hardly supposeable they always can; yet, whilst they continue to be in Bondage to their Sins and Vices, they must be still far distant from the Ways of Peace, and subjected to much and great Uneasiness. For though every thing else about them should be quiet, yet their own unruly Passions will not. One vicious Inclination or other will be perpetually craving to be satisfied; and though the Difficulties to be surmounted, in order to gratify it, be ever so great, yet how miserably are they harassed till it be accomplished; and yet how much more, if, as it often happens, their Labour, after all, should prove in vain! Not to omit, that such is the Nature of disordered Passions, as that, by endeavouring to satisfy them, they are but the more inflamed, and made more craving than they were before. And now, What Peace can dwell within that Soul, that is thus perpetually tossed as on a raging Ocean; a Slave to every Lust; driven to and fro by every Blast of Passion; impatiently seeking Rest, yet finding none; always deceived, yet courting the Delusion; and dreading Pain, yet running on to meet it? But though the Wicked and Ungodly, like the troubled Sea, are utter Strangers to serene Repose, continually hurried on, they scarce know

know whither, by a Multitude of unruly and tumultuous Passions, and vexed and tortured by an evil Conscience, which, like a deadly Poison, kills their sweetest Comforts ; the Servants of God, on the contrary, who obey his Laws, and have presented themselves to him *a living Sacrifice*, are as it were elevated by Faith into those peaceful Regions, where they breathe as in a free and unmolested Air, and Storms and Molestations seldom reach them. *Being justified by Faith*, they are at *Peace with God (f)* ; and, in the room of that Uneasiness, which is the common Attendant of a Sense of Guilt, enjoy that solid and well-grounded Peace, which is the natural Consequence of a Sense of Pardon. They need no longer dread the Frowns of Heaven, or tremble at the Forethoughts of a future Reckoning ; but, having made their Peace with God, through *Jesus Christ*, may sing sweet Songs of Peace unto their Souls ; may lay them down in Peace, and sleep in Quiet, safe in his Favour from destructive Harms ; may even think of Death with Peace and Comfort, and stretch their joyful Prospects to eternal Ages. So that if it be reasonable for us to seek our own Advantage, either with regard to the Health of our Bodies, or the Quiet and Peace of our Minds, then must it be reasonable for us to observe God's Laws,
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(f) *Rom. v. 1.*

and to square our Lives by his divine Commandments. But again ;

FOURTHLY, The Service of God must also appear to be a reasonable Service, as it is the surest Path to true and solid Pleasure. For what is Religion, or the serving God, but the acting agreeably to our Minds and Consciences, and to the original Constitution of our Make and Frame? Which, besides the Peace it must occasion in us, must be also a never-failing Spring of solid Joy and Pleasure. *Her Ways, says Solomon, are Ways of Pleasantness (g).* And what can possibly be a Foundation for our living pleasantly, if the Testimony of a good Conscience, and the Assurance of God's Favour, be not so? Or what Prospects can be sufficient to excite it in us, if the Prospect of being happy for ever and ever will not do it? It must indeed be acknowledged, that there are Pleasures, such as they are, to be found in a dissolute and vicious Life. But then it must be allowed, at the same time, that the Pleasures of Religion are as much superior to the Pleasures of Sin, as the Foundations they are built upon are of a more solid and rational Nature. For what Comparison can there possibly be, between the most pleasurable Enjoyments of a guilty Mind, and the rational, solid, and substantial Pleasures of a peaceful Conscience, and a quiet Spirit, arising from a

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(g) *Prov. iii. 17.*

Consciousness of being at Peace with God, of having the Supreme Being for our Friend and Father, and the transporting Views of an eternal Heaven? It is very true, these Pleasures of the Righteous are not so visible as those of others; they do not break out in loud and noisy Laughters, in the midst of which the Heart may yet be sorrowful; but they are still as real, and far more deep and lasting. Nor are the Pleasures of Religion only real and solid, and such as are built on rational and good Foundations, but, on many other Accounts also, the most excellent and desirable of any; as they are such as we may always be certain, if not wanting to ourselves, of obtaining; as they are such as never satiate or cloy, but rather still increase by frequent Repetition; as they have also a natural Tendency to increase all others, as well by teaching us to use them in the properest manner, as by enabling us to enjoy them with a quiet Conscience; as they are such as are not dependent on the Wills of others, or subject to the Humours and Caprice of Men; such as it is not in the Power of our most inveterate Enemies to deprive us of; such as will bear us Company in every Station; continue with us even in Age and Sickness; which no Storms of Adversity can blow away; and which even Death itself wants Power to put an End to. But this naturally leads us to consider,

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FIFTHLY, That the Service of God must be also highly reasonable, as it has a Tendency to support us even in all Conditions, and, in whatsoever State we are, to make us therewith content. It has indeed a natural Tendency, as before observed, to keep a great many Evils away from us; those of the Mind, by blessing us with a peaceful Conscience; those of the Body, by leading us to a proper Temperance; and those of the Estate, by putting us on an honest Industry, and restraining all extravagant Expences. But yet, as it must be owned, after all, that Afflictions are common to all Men, and that there is no perfect Beatitude on this Side Heaven; it must therefore be a further Recommendation of this blessed Service, to consider its Efficacy to alleviate and to sooth those Evils, which it is in no Man's Power wholly to prevent. Let it be therefore, that the Righteous have their Troubles, as well as the Wicked; that they are liable to be ruffled by distasteful Accidents; to be exercised with a painful and distempered Body; or to be oppressed with difficult and narrow Circumstances: Yet, as the present State is not their State of Recompence; as they may still be happy in their Hopes and Prospects; and as they have, besides, the Promises of God to comfort them, that *all things shall work together for their final Good,*

Good (*b*), and add new Glories to their future Crown (*i*) ; so have they always Cordials to support their Spirits, and sooth their Minds to Peace, and calm Contentment. As to the Wicked, indeed, their Case is very different ; for as all their Joys depend on their Prosperity, it can be no wonder, if, in Adversity, they are quite without them ; nor can we justly expect any thing but Dejection from them. Should all their Lives indeed be spent in Fear and Trembling, it would be nothing but what, God knows, they have weighty Reasons for, even though their Affairs at present should be never so prosperous, if they consider only Whom they have made their Enemy, and what they have to fear from His most just Resentments. But it is not so with such as love God's Laws, and make it their Care to accomplish his divine Injunctions. They have nothing to fear from God, but much to hope for ; may live secure in his Almighty Favour ; trust their Concerns to his unerring Wisdom ; and cheer their Souls with his paternal Goodness. A Soul devoted to this blessed Service lives in a purer and more heavenly Air, and sees with other Eyes than common Men ; and, by soaring frequently aloft on the Wings of divine Contemplation, it gets above those Clouds that hide the Light from others, and enjoys a far more peaceful and continued Sun-shine, than can be the

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(*b*) Rom. viii. 28.(*i*) 2 Cor. iv. 17.

Portion of those, whose Habitation is wholly below. It sees indeed the Glories of the World, but it is as from the Pinnacle of the Temple, or as from the Top of an exceeding high Mountain, and from which they appear comparatively small and contemptible; and so much the more, as it sees itself formed for greater and diviner Things. It does not only look through the Casements of Flesh, but it has Eyes of Faith, by which it sees and discerns things invisible, and spies a great deal of Good, where others see nothing but Evil. In short, it sees that all things are managed by a Being of infinite Wisdom and Goodness; and, which is more than all, it sees this Being is its Friend and Father; and is therefore so assured, that all things relating to him shall be wisely ordered, as that he is thereby sweetly drawn to acquiesce in every thing. He may not indeed have always what he wishes; but then he knows, that he has always what he ought to wish, and, therefore, sufficient Cause to be content and easy. My Condition, may he say, let it be what it will, is such as God sees to be best for me, whose unfathomable Wisdom is infinitely superior to mine; and with whose all-wise and all-merciful Administrations, however seemingly harsh and unpleasant, I have the highest Reason to be at all times satisfied. Have I Health and Prosperity? These Blessings receive an Addition, as they are given in Mercy, and in Favour to

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me. Have I Affliction and Adversity? Even these shall be to me for Good. Am I persecuted and despised? I may still rejoice, and be exceeding glad; because the greater, for that Reason, shall be my Reward in Heaven (k). Why then should I be uneasy, or let my Soul be disquieted within me, at the having only what is fit and best for me? Hence but a little while, a few short Years at most, and all my Pains and Troubles shall be over; and everlasting Rest, and Peace, and Joy, succeed them. And what so great Matter then, how it fares with me in this Inch of Time, when an unending Happiness is but just before me, and which the Hand of Death will shortly lead me into? To an Eye of Sense, my Case may indeed be bad, and I seem poor, unhappy, and afflicted; but if viewed, on the other hand, by an Eye of Faith, I am really rich, and glorious, and happy, above what all the Sinners in the World can boast. But further:

SIXTHLY, The Service of God must be also highly reasonable, as it ennobles our Natures, and makes us truly honourable; and that not only in the Sight of God, good Angels, and good Men, but even of the Wicked themselves; who, however averse to lead a holy Life; and prone perhaps, in Word, to ridicule such as do so, yet cannot, at the same time,

(k) *Matt. v. 11, 12.*

time, but inwardly approve of their Conduct, and pay them Homage in their Heart and Mind. For even great as the Corruption and Depravity of the Generality is, there are yet few so bad, and lost to Sense and Reason, as not to see, that Virtue is indeed praiseworthy, and such as justly merits Honour and Esteem. And, indeed, so long as Humility continues to be more honourable than Pride ; so long as a merciful Disposition is more amiable in its own Nature than a cruel one ; so long as Truth and Fidelity continue to be more honourable than Deceit and Treachery ; and a peaceable, placable, and forgiving Temper, is more approved than Passion, Spite, and Malice ; so long must Virtue continue to be more honourable than Vice, and he who serves his God, than he who serves his Lusts, and brutal Passions. It is, indeed, the only Nobility that is worth contending for, and without which all other is but splendid Shame. To which may be added,

SEVENTHLY, That the Service of God must appear to be a reasonable Service, as it is what will enable us to triumph over Death itself. Riches may comfort us in the Time of Life ; but they cannot profit us in the Hour of Death. Vice too may promise us Happiness in Health ; but it can only at Death speak Terror and Dismay. But true Religion is a Friend in Death, and such as will still continue to speak
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Peace and Comfort, even when there is nothing else in the whole World that can. The Sinner's Life, it is granted, may be gay and pleasant; but in what a dreadful manner does he make his Exit! How wishfully does he look back upon his darling World! With what Regret and Reluctancy does he bid it a final Adieu! How does he linger, trembling, round the Shores of Light; and start, affrighted at the Gloom before him! But, though the Joys of the Worldling then fail, and the Hopes of the Hypocrite perish; though *the Wicked is driven away in his Wickedness*; yet *the Righteous has Hope in his Death* (l), and such as is sufficient to enable him to resign his Soul, with a becoming Decency, to Him who gave it. The being able to look back on a well-ordered Conduct, excites such Peace and Pleasure in the Mind, as reflects a Brightness on the Close of Life, and, like a friendly Sun, shines with a chearing Light, even in the midst of the Shadows of Death. Death, indeed, to the Wicked, is *the King of Terrors* (m); but it is no more to the Righteous, than a friendly Messenger, sent to call them hence into a better State. And therefore, though the Wicked justly tremble at the Approach of it; yet the Christian, on the other hand, who has kept the Faith, who is reconciled to God through Christ, and, by the Assistance of his Spirit and Grace, has run the Race appointed him to run,

(l) *Prov. xiv. 32.*(m) *Job xviii. 14.*

run, may look Death in the Face without Terror, and feel his Approaches without any tormenting Dread, crying out, in the Language of the holy *Psalmist*, *Though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I will fear no Evil: For thou, O God, art with me; thy Rod, and thy Staff, they comfort me* (n). He may entertain himself with the pleasant and delightful Prospect, that he is come to the End of an uncertain Life; that he is going to be delivered from an evil World; that all his Troubles are now almost over; and that all to come is everlasting Peace. But this brings us to consider,

In the EIGHTH and last Place, That the Service of God must be also a reasonable Service, as it stands connected with such a glorious and divine Reward, as shall not only exceed our most exalted Wishes, but still go on increasing even to endless Ages. The Pleasures of Sin are but of short Duration; they can last at longest but the Time of Life; but the Fruits of Virtue are lasting and durable, and such as will keep us Company beyond the Grave. *Bodily Exercise profiteth little*, or, as it is in the Margin, *for a little time; but Godliness is profitable unto all Things, having Promise of the Life that now is, and of that which is to come* (o). So that what the Enemy of Mankind said of Job, with

(n) *Psalm* xxiii. 4.(o) *1 Tim.* iv. 8.

with regard to his worldly Prosperity, *Doth Job fear God for nought (p)?* if we do but apply it to the other World, may be equally said of all good Men in general. For God is not one that says to any of his Servants, Seek ye my Face, or obey my Voice, in vain. He has indeed no other End in all the Laws he gives us, than to make us meet for a happy Immortality. For our Righteousness extends not to him, nor is he any-way bettered or advantaged by it. The Righteous die indeed at present, and as to this World, as well as the Wicked; but their Souls are in the Hand of God, and there shall no Torment touch them. In the Sight of the Unwise they seem to die, and their Departure is taken for Misery, and their going from us, to be utter Destruction: But they are in Peace. For though they be punished in the Sight of Men, yet is their Hope full of Immortality. And, having been a little chastised, they shall be greatly rewarded: For God proved them, and found them worthy for himself. As Gold in the Furnace hath he tried them, and received them as a Burnt-offering. And, in the time of their Visitation, they shall shine, and run to and fro, like Sparks among the Stubble. They shall judge the Nations, and have Dominion over the People, and their Lord shall reign for ever—For glorious is the Fruit of good Labours, and the Root of Wisdom shall never fall away—The Hope of the

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(p) Job i. 9.

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Ungodly is like Dust, that is blown away with the Wind; like a thin Froth, that is driven away with the Storm; like as the Smoke, which is dispersed here-and-there with a Tempest; and passeth away, as the Remembrance of a Guest that tarrieth but a Day. But the Righteous live for evermore; their Reward also is with the Lord, and the Care of them is with the Most High. Therefore shall they receive a glorious Kingdom, and a beautiful Crown, from the Lord's Hand: For with his Right-hand shall he cover them, and with his Arm shall he protect them (q). For yet a little while, and the Wicked shall not be: Yea, thou shalt diligently consider his Place, and it shall not be. But the Meek shall inherit the Earth, and shall delight themselves in the Abundance of Peace.—The Lord knoweth the Days of the Upright, and their Inheritance shall be for ever.—But the Wicked shall perish, and the Enemies of the Lord shall be as the Fat of Lambs; they shall consume; into Smoke shall they consume away.—For the Lord loveth Judgment, and forsaketh not his Saints; they are preserved for ever: But the Seed of Evil-doers shall be cut off. The Righteous shall inherit the Land, and dwell therein for ever (r). Yea, the Time is coming, and draws on apace, when they that be wise shall shine as the Brightness of the Firmament; and they that turn many to Righteousness,

(q) *Wisdom* iii. 1---8. 15. and v. 14, 15, 16

(r) *Psalms* xxxvii. 10, 11. 18. 20. 28, 29.

ousness, as the Stars, for ever and ever (s); when the Righteous shall shine forth as the Sun in the Kingdom of their Father (t); and God, according to his Promise, shall create new Heavens, and a new Earth, wherein dwelleth Righteousness (u); and the Tabernacle of God shall be with Men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his People; and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all Tears from their Eyes, and there shall be no more Death, neither Sorrow, nor Crying, neither shall there be any more Pain—And they shall reign for ever and ever (w). But let this suffice as to the Doctrinal Part; and let us now proceed, in a few Words, to apply it.

And here, with regard to such as are yet walking in the Ways of Sin; Let me resume the Exhortation delivered by the Apostle in our Text, and *Beseech you, by the Mercies of God, that ye present your Bodies a living Sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which, as you have seen, is your reasonable Service.* If you have any Concern to act as it becomes you; any Concern for the Health and Welfare of your Bodies; or any Value for a peaceful and a quiet Mind; as ever you would either live or die in Peace and Comfort; or hope for Support in Troubles and Calamities;

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(s) *Dan. xii. 3.* (t) *Matt. xiii. 43.* (u) *2 Pet. iii. 13.* (w) *Rev. xxi. 3, 4. and xxii. 5.*

or have any Desires to be happy in the World to come ; let it be now your Care, as you are here directed, to present yourselves to God as *living Sacrifices, holy and acceptable* in his Sight. Can ye enlist yourselves into the Service of a better Master ? Or can ye hope for greater Pleasures from your Sins, than those which he has promised to his faithful Servants ? If not, then cease your frivolous Excuses, and plead the Pleasures of your Sins no longer ; but, leaving those that last but for a Season, seek those that will continue and abide for ever. Could it be even supposed, that a vicious Course was the best for the present, and such as rendered Life most easy and delightful ; yet it would not so alter the Case, but that the Service of God must still appear to be your reasonable Service, as your Continuance here is at best but a very Trifle, if compared to your Continuance in the World to come. Were the present Life indeed to terminate your Beings, and you had nothing either to hope for, or to fear beyond it, the Case, no doubt of it, would be greatly altered : But, as you all profess that this is not the Case, and are ready to own, that you believe the contrary, what possible Apology can you frame, or think of, that can be sufficient to justify so mad a Conduct ? Is it that the Pleasures of Sin are very fair and tempting ? Yet must not the heavenly Happiness be allowed still better ? And should not the greatest Good be

be therefore most preferred, and temporal Things give way to Things eternal? Rise then, and think like Men, and act like Christians; and each prepare yourselves with Chearfulness to the Work before you. Why, being reasonable Creatures, should ye not act as your Reason directs you? Why, being called to the Enjoyment of so great a Happiness, should ye not with Joy and Thankfulness strive and labour after it, and even count nothing too much, if so be that ye can but obtain it? Behold, eternal Glory calls you, and invites you; and the Grace of God is ready to assist you. Fly then the treacherous Paths of Death and Hell, and enter those of everlasting Life; or be assured, and know, there will be else a time, when you shall wish in vain you had been more obedient.

And, to add no more upon the present Subject; as Sinners should hence be excited to enlist themselves in this blessed Service, so should Saints also to be stedfast and industrious in it. For in what better Service can you spend your Strength? Or in what other Service can you live so happily? As you have therefore begun to tread these happy Paths, be hence encouraged to go further in them. Let nothing prevail upon you to return, or in the least to repent you of this blessed Option: But as ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him; rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the Faith, as ye have been taught,

taught, abounding therein with Thanksgiving (x). If there are any Parts of this Service difficult and unpleasing, yet still consider, that it is highly reasonable. If your Way lies at any time through Thorns and Briars, remember still, that it is the Way to Glory. Yet but a little while, and the Days of your Pilgrimage shall be ended, and ye shall rest from your Labours, and your Works shall follow you (y). Heaven is the Country ye are travelling to, and the great God, the Master ye at present serve: Rouse then your Souls, and all that is within you; and pursue with Vigour your appointed Work, which shall be quickly recompensed with such Crowns of Glory, as shall shame you to think how little ye have done for them. Let me therefore leave you with those Words of the Apostle Peter; Ye therefore, Beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the Error of the Wicked, fall from your own Stedfastness. But grow in Grace, and in the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: To him be Glory, both now and for ever. Amen. (z)!

(x) *Col. ii. 6, 7.*
iii. 17, 18.

(y) *Rev. xiv. 13.*

(z) *2 Pet.*



S E R M O N VII.

*The Gain of the World, no Amends
for the Loss of the Soul.*

Matt. xvi. 26.

*For what is a Man profited, if he shall gain
the whole World, and lose his own Soul?
Or what shall a Man give in Exchange for
his Soul?*

Whoever looks seriously and considerately about him, into the present Posture and State of Affairs, and views the Face of Things with an attentive Eye, must be tempted, at first Sight, to imagine, that this was never designed for the only or final Abode of Mankind. The Divine Providence seems plainly, at present, not to have accomplished half its Designs; nor can we easily apprehend it either just or good, without supposing some further,
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and some future Scenes, in order to perfect and complete the Scheme. Nor are we only led to such Reflections by the Light of Nature, but they are also further confirmed to us by those sacred Oracles, which we justly look on as the Words of God, and which we all as Christians profess our Belief of. We are there assured, in the plainest and the strongest Terms, that our present State is only a State of Trial, or of Preparation for our Translation to another ; and where either eternal Life, or Punishment, awaits us, according to our Conduct and Behaviour here. This is both the Voice of Reason, and the Voice of Scripture, and the avowed Faith and Belief of us all ; and yet such is the unaccountable Stupidity of the Generality, and such the almost incredible Frenzy to which Sin has brought us (did not daily Experience too plainly shew the Truth of it), that, instead of making any Preparation for our Happiness in that future World, which we were chiefly made for, we seem rather to act and behave as if we were designed to live always in this ; even though we know, at the same time, that our Continuance here is but for a little while, and that even that little is wholly uncertain. We are so strangely bewitched with the World we are travelling in, as to pay little Regard to the World we are travelling to ; though our Welfare there is undoubtedly a Matter of much greater Moment, than any thing we can hope for or expect

pect whilst here. For what are the Profits or Pleasures of this transient and uncertain State, when set in Opposition to those far greater and more lasting Pleasures, which invite our Attention in the World to come, or to those tremendous Pains and Torments which will ensue the Neglect of them?

It is for the sake of representing these Matters in their proper Light, which Men, drowned in worldly Business, seldom think of, that I have now chosen these Words of our Saviour for the Foundation of the ensuing Discourse, which, though more immediately brought in, as appears from the Verse preceeding, to shew the Reasonableness even of sacrificing our Lives, should it be necessary for us, in order to save our Souls, are yet equally applicable to all other Cases, where the Concerns of this Life come into Dispute with the Concerns of the other, or there is any Competition or Rivalship between the Gains or Losses of this World, and the more important Gains or Losses of the next. In all such Cases as these, it must be highly proper for us to remember what is here laid down, and to ask ourselves, in the Words of the Text, *What is a Man profited, if he shall gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul? Or what shall a Man give in Exchange for his Soul?*—What is a Man profited? That is, how infinitely great would be his Loss, who should even purchase the Gain of the World by the

irrecoverable Loss of his Soul? Which is no other than the Loss of himself, the Loss of an immortal and unending Happiness, and the being plunged into remediless and eternal Ruin.

The Sinner may here have Leave to call in all his Rhetoric, and to represent the World in the most glorious manner he can; let him paint its Pleasures in the most inviting Colours; let him promise himself all the Happiness he can fondly fancy in the most universal Empire, and the greatest Affluence of Riches and Honours; let him, in short, suppose himself revelling in Delights of all Kinds, swimming in Luxury, and dissolved in Pleasures, and, though it be an impossible Supposition for a Man in this World, an utter Stranger to all manner of Uneasiness; the Argument in the Text will nevertheless hold good, and we may still ask, and with very good Reason, What would *such a Man* be profited, though he should gain and enjoy all this, and that not only for the Term of one Life, but of Ten or Twenty, at the tremendous Expence of losing his Soul for ever? For can it be worth any Man's while to ruin himself for ever, for the sake of enjoying the World for the Term of a few short Years? Or can the Gain of the World, in the Opinion of any Man of common Sense, even though we could live to enjoy it till its Dissolution, be thought a sufficient Amends for the Loss of eternal Happiness,

ness, and the being destroyed with an everlasting Destruction?

But it is to be remembred, after all, that this is only an imaginary Case; for there never yet was any such happy Man; nor is there any room for supposing, that there ever will. And therefore, instead of entertaining ourselves with any such vain Expectations, it must rather concern us to inquire, what we are likely to get for our Souls, and how very little it is that we can fairly hope for; that so the Folly of this Exchange being so much the more apparent, we may the more effectually be prevented and deterred from the Folly of making it. And, to this Purpose, I shall consider,

In the FIRST Place, What that Gain of the World more particularly is, which we are so apt to purchase at the Rate here mentioned.

SECONDLY, What is implied in that Loss of the Soul our Saviour here refers to. And then,

THIRDLY, and lastly, Close the Whole with a brief Application.

And, FIRST, Let me crave your Attention, whilst I briefly proceed to consider, what is implied in that Gain of the World, which we are so apt to purchase at the Rate here spoken of. For it is not all Gain of the World which is

attended with any such Consequence, but only such a sinful Gain of it as is inconsistent with our Duty to God, and with those Rules of Action, which he has prescribed us. The World, no doubt, was made to be enjoyed; nor was Religion ever designed to take us off from *using the World*, but only to teach us so to use *as not abusing it* (a). It was, I say, never intended to make us utterly careless of the Things of this Life, but only to teach us to postpone them to the far greater Affairs of our Souls, and such as concern our Welfare in the Life to come. There is therefore no doubt, but that a good Man may enjoy the World with a great deal of Pleasure, and yet be happy when he dies notwithstanding. There is no doubt, but he may gain what is esteemed a considerable Share in it, and yet be so happy as to work out his Salvation too. And, therefore, all that Gain of the World which can be here intended, can be no more than that Overplus which Men get by sinning, over-and-above what they could do, should they live religiously; there being no other Gain of the World, which can endanger the Loss of our Souls; and, consequently, no other which can come into Competition with it. And though some Sinners get more, and others less, in Exchange for their Souls, yet as none can possibly get more than the present Profits and Pleasures of Sin for them, so is the Gain

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(a) 1 Cor. vii. 31.

so very inconsiderable, and, for the most part, so dearly paid for, even here in this Life, that there can be no Reason to envy their Happiness, or to grudge them any of those Profits they so dearly purchase. But should their Advantages be ever so great, yet, when it is once considered, that it is the Price of their Souls, all they are like to have in Exchange for an eternal Happiness, and to make them Amends for being ruined and undone for ever; in what a shocking Light does the Exchange appear? Should every Sinner get Riches and Honours, or were it even possible to suppose them to get Crowns and Kingdoms; yet, if it is but considered, on the other hand, what better Prospects they part with in lieu of them, even Crowns and Kingdoms are as less than nothing. And if even Crowns and Kingdoms would be dearly purchased at such an extravagant Price, as that of giving our Souls in Exchange for them; how much greater yet must we esteem his Folly, who sells his Soul for every little Trifle, and very often for nothing but the empty Hopes of it? For though Wickedness now-and-then is successful, and meets with its wished-for Reward, yet this is so far from being always the Case, that the Generality of Sinners find it otherwise, and are only Pursuers of Evil, to their own Destruction. Such as have any Sparks of Reason or Religion left in them, are often found to gain the Torments of a guilty Conscience,

science, whilst others gain a Halter, or a Stab, a broken Constitution, and a painful Body. There are some, indeed, who gain Riches and Honours ; but the most are rewarded with Disgrace and Poverty, and such a Condition as they had rather be rid of. They, however, who get most, get only a Life of Brutishness and Sensuality, which does but help to ruin and destroy itself. Such, in short, are the Wages and the Fruits of Sin, and such the Price of silly and unthinking Souls ; not any of the real Advantages, the real Pleasures and Comforts of Life ; for these may generally be enjoyed by good Men, and that in a much sublimer Manner than they can by bad ones ; but only some unrighteous Profits, or some brutal Pleasures, some false Appearances of Joy and Happiness, which rather help to aggravate than relieve our Cravings, and to give us Hopes of Good, than any real Enjoyment.

For, in the *First* Place, they are such Fruits as are very apt to deceive us in the Hopes which we have of obtaining them. We labour for them amidst many Uncertainties, and can hardly ever, or rather never, be sure of them, till such time as we actually have them. Probability is the surest Ground that ever we have to go upon ; and yet how often are even the strongest Probabilities attended in the Issue with unlooked-for Disappointments ! Some Accidents or other, wholly before un-

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seen, change the whole Figure in an instant into a different Aspect; and what but now was full of Probability, is not only rendered improbable, but even hopeless; and, instead of a Certainty of our succeeding, there appears rather a Certainty, on the other hand, that we never shall. *The Race is not always, as the wise Man long ago observed, to the Swift, nor the Battle to the Strong; neither yet Bread to the Wise, nor yet Riches to Men of Understanding, nor yet Favour to Men of Skill; but Time and Chance happeneth to them all (b).* Some unlooked-for Interpositions of Providence, which to us appear wholly casual and fortuitous, and which it is in no Man's Power to prevent or guard against, do often defeat the best-concerted Projects, destroy and overturn the strongest Probabilities, and either succeed or disappoint us in our several Prospects, as the great Ruler and Governor of all things pleases. Nor are they only thus apt to deceive us in the Hopes which we have of obtaining them; but it is also further to be observed,

In the *Second Place*, That they are unable to make us happy, even though we do. For, besides that they are very apt to desert us when we least suspect them, to *make themselves Wings, and fly away as an Eagle towards Heaven (c)*; they are sure to deceive us even while we have them. For they can neither satisfy the Desires they have raised, nor

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(b) *Eccles. ix. 11.* (c) *Prov. xxiii. 5.*

answer the Expectations they have cherished. So that as the Prophet *Isaiah* very justly describes it, all our Labour and Toil for these things, is but *spending our Money for that which is not Bread, and our Labour for that which satisfieth not* (d). Riches and Honours, and all sensual Pleasures, have all been tried over and over, and yet could no solid Happiness be extracted from them. The Rich have told us, that it was not 'in them; and the Honourable, that they knew not the Place of it; and the Voluptuous also, that in all their Attempts hitherto, they had not been so successful as to find it. And though every Age has renewed the Inquiry, the Event has been always the same; they have disquieted themselves only in a vain Pursuit, and left off as far from finding it as ever. But even supposing for once that this was not the Case, that the Fruits of Sin were really as large as Fancy, that they were able to answer the Expectations which the Sinner has from them, and that they would also faithfully attend him through the Whole of Life; yet it is to be considered,

In the *Third Place*, That, as their Duration is short and uncertain, so this must greatly diminish them, how great soever. For it is but a little while that we can possibly hope to enjoy them; nor can it be long, at most, before those *evil Days* come on, when we shall say,

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(d) *Isaiah* lv. 2.

We have no Pleasure in them—when the Dust must return to the Earth as it was, and the Spirit to God who gave it (e); when Princes must die, and leave their Crowns behind them; and when they that trust in their Wealth, and boast themselves in the Multitude of their Riches, shall none of them be able to redeem their Souls, that they should live for ever, and not see Corruption (f); when Wine, and Music, and Delight, must cease; when Mirth and Jollity shall be no more; when Beauty, Pomp, and Glory, must decay; the breathless Carcase sink into the Grave; and every worldly Pleasure vanish like a Dream. But, having thus seen the End of all the Sinner's Gains, let us now proceed,

In the SECOND Place, To view his Loss, or what is implied in that Loss of the Soul our Saviour here refers to. And this implies,

First, The Loss of all the Glories and the Joys of Heaven.

Secondly, The Loss of all the Pleasures and Delights of Earth: And,

Thirdly, The suffering all the Torments of that future Hell, prepared for Sinners in the World to come.

And, *First*, The Loss of the Soul implies the Loss of Heaven, of the great Happiness of

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(e) *Eccles.* xii. 1. 7. (f) *Psal.* xlix. 6--9.

which the Scriptures speak so highly, that we even want Capacity to take it in. Nor is it at all to be wondered at, that we are at a Loss in conceiving those Glories, which he who had seen some Part of, has declared *unutterable* (g). And, indeed, notwithstanding all the Descriptions that are given of this Matter in Scripture, and the many glorious things it has said about it, we must yet confess, after all, with the Apostle *John*, that *it doth not yet appear what we shall be*, in any perfect or adequate Manner (h). Thus much, however, we are plainly informed of it, that it has the Two following excellent and peculiar Properties; *namely*, that it is both a perfect and satisfying Happiness, and such as shall last and continue for ever.

And, *First*, It is one Property of this Happiness, that it is of a perfect and satisfying Nature, and such as is every-way proportioned to all the Wants and Desires of the Soul; which is what can be affirmed of no other State of Happiness whatever. For the most perfect Happiness to be met with here, has still many Imperfections attending it, and is utterly unable to afford us that full and complete Satisfaction, which is so essentially necessary to a true Felicity. This is too precious a Jewel to be found on Earth, nor must we expect to meet with it while we live below. We may range the worldly Maze in vain to find it, and

(g) 2 Cor. xii. 4.

(h) 1 John iii. 2.

and search the gay Delights of every Scene, it will still be found to baffle all Pursuit of it; the Young are seeking it in vain, and the Old are unable to find it; it is neither in the lowly Cottage, nor the stately Palace; we may indeed discern some Glimpse of it in the pious Mind; but it is only fully to be found in Heaven, where only is *Fulness of Joy, and—Pleasures for evermore (i)*. There, indeed, we shall find it in its full Perfection, where every Wish shall meet with full Enjoyment, and every Want be utterly unknown; where neither Sin nor Curse shall ever find Admittance, but Sorrow, Grief, and Pain, flee far away, and Death be sentenced to perpetual Exile (*k*). Which brings us to

The *Second* Property of the heavenly Happiness; which is, that it shall last and continue for ever. All earthly Happiness is of short Duration; it is not only imperfect, but fleeting and transient: But the heavenly Happiness is everlasting. It is not confined to the pitiful Trifle of Threescore Years and Ten, or even to the Period of so many Thousand. It is not a Kingdom that is to be enjoyed for awhile, and then to cease for ever: But such an everlasting Kingdom as shall never end; such a State of Happiness as shall never cease; but continue for ever and ever: To which Ten thousand Years, in Comparison, are but

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(i) *Psalms* xvi. ult.(k) *Rev.* xxi. 4. and xxii. 3,

as one short Day, or as one flying Moment; nay, that infinitely more exceeds the Length of even Ten thousand Ages, than they do the smallest Time that can enter into our Hearts to conceive of, as there will still be some Proportion between even the longest and the shortest Time, whereas there can be none between Time and Eternity, to which Ten thousand Ages are as less than nothing, even as less than nothing, and Vanity. For this is a Day that never knows a Night; that can look back upon Millions and Millions of Ages elapsed, and yet have never the fewer to come; an infinite Stream, that glides along for ever, without any Decrease, and without any Approach to an End; a Sea which is always spending, and yet never spent; a Duration which every Man's Reason tells him that it is, but which no finite Mind can possibly comprehend. And now, may we not safely ask again, and leave it to every Man's Conscience to determine, whether it must not be a very foolish Exchange, to exchange such a State of Happiness as this, for all the Glories that this World can boast of? And much more, to exchange it for such inconsiderable Trifles as Men commonly and generally do?

But here, perhaps, the Sinner may imagine, that, if this be all, he shall not much regard it; that, though Heaven be certainly a very glorious and inviting State, yet that he shall do as well without it hereafter, as he does at present;

sent; and that therefore, if he can but enjoy himself as he pleases here, the Loss of that will not so much disturb him. And, truly, could he but carry his Pleasures, even vain as they are, along with him, I do not know but this might be the Case; for sordid Pleasures suit a sordid Mind, better than those of a sublimer Nature. But be not deceived; this is not all your Punishment, only that you shall lose that Happiness, which you might have had, or that you shall not be so happy as the Just and Righteous; for the Loss of the Soul implies a great deal more than barely the Loss of an eternal Heaven; though that is certainly too much to lose, and more than all the World can make Amends for: It implies further,

In the *Second Place*, The Loss of all the Pleasures and Delights of Earth; that you shall be stript of all those present Pleasures and Diversions, which serve whilst here to drown the Voice of Reason, and to divert you from thinking of your Case and Circumstances. And what a deplorable Condition must you then be in, when every Joy has taken its Flight, and left you? When there are not the least Remains, no not even so much as the flattering Hopes of them? When you shall find, that you have not only lost a glorious and eternal Happiness, but that you have nothing left you to make you any Amends for it? When you shall see, that there is no other Place
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of Happiness but Heaven, and that you have foolishly and eternally lost it, for such insignificant Trifles, as can then do you no manner of Service, but that have forsaken and left you in your greatest Need? When Vice shall lay aside its tempting Habit, and stand before you in vindictive Terrors? When it shall no longer entertain you in its wonted manner; no longer tempt you with the sparkling Wine, nor strive to please you with the Voice of Melody? When it shall no longer point you to the Seats of Honour, nor try to amuse you by the Hopes of Grandeur? No longer sooth your Minds with Scenes of Pleasure, nor fill your Heads with flattering Expectations; but all its Joys and Pleasures disappear, leave you in vain to mourn your brutal Folly, and see too late the Error of your Ways?—Do but suppose yourselves at present in this dismal Station, that you had really, though only so far, lost your Souls; and what would you give, or rather what would you not give, if you had it to give, in Exchange for them? If you could but redeem them from this sad Condition, and be allowed to hope for Happiness and Heaven once more? But, alas! even this is not all that is implied in the Loss of the Soul; there is something more dreadful and tremendous still: For it implies further,

In the *Third* Place, The suffering all the Torments of that future Hell prepared for Sinners in the World to come; and which is
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represented in the Scriptures by a *Lake of Fire and Brimstone* ; by an *everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels* ; the *Worm that never dies, and the Fire that never goes out* ; which, at the very first Mention, strike the Fancy with dreadful Ideas, and represent to us such a fearful and amazing Scene of inconceivable and unutterable Torments, as God of his Mercy grant, we may none of us ever experience, or be so mad as to run ourselves into, for any of those trifling Advantages that Vice can yield us.

And now, what is the Use that we should make of this ? Are we to look upon such Considerations as only an airy Amusement, to help to pass away a leisure Hour ? Or are we not rather to look upon them as Matters which very highly and nearly concern us, and which ought to be diligently attended to by every one of us ? Let us consider them then in this Light ; and let us hence learn,

In the *First Place*, The great Wisdom and Prudence of a Life of Virtue, and the great Folly and Madness of a Life of Sin. For if the saving our Souls be of more Avail than the Gain of the World to us, how wisely, as well as virtuously, must he behave, who makes this his principal and highest End ? Here then lies the Wisdom of Virtue, and here lies the Folly of Sin ; in that the former is nothing but a wise Care to secure a great and an eternal Felicity, and to escape a tremendous and
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eternal Ruin; whilst the latter is an exchanging an eternal Happiness, and a running headlong into eternal Perdition, for the sake of a few transitory Trifles, and vain 'empty Pleasures, that can last at longest but a little Season, and that cannot make us happy even while they do. The former, I say, is nothing but a wise parting with some small Advantages, in order to save such as are inconceivably greater; and the latter, nothing but the throwing away an eternal Happiness, in order to obtain a temporal and fleeting Shadow of it. The Righteous only avoids a few sinful and forbidden Pleasures, to secure a great and unending Salvation; whilst the Sinner foolishly hazards his Soul for every little Trifle that comes in his way, and rushes inconsiderately on eternal Ruin, for the sake of obtaining a few Moments of a brutal Pleasure. This is plainly the true State of the Case, how little soever considered, or how light soever, the Sinner may at present make of it. There is no Man can sin against God, but, at the same time, he must risk his own Soul; and how wise soever he may think himself now, in his latter End he will find himself a Fool, and that he has been acting one of the most foolish and unworthy Parts that a reasonable Creature can be ever engaged in. *For as Righteousness tendeth to Life; so he that pursueth Evil, pursueth it to his own Death*

Death (l) : And as he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap Life everlasting ; so he that soweth to his Flesh, shall as surely of the Flesh reap Corruption (m). But, to go on ;

Secondly, Hence may we learn also the Reasonableness of submitting to any Hardships or Sufferings whatever, rather than to act contrary to our Duty to God, and thereby endanger the Loss of our Souls. This was the very Reason, as we observed in the Beginning, of our Lord's making use of these Words. He had been acquainting his Disciples, in the Twenty-first Verse, that he must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many Things of the Elders, and Chief Priests, and Scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the Third Day. And, having chid Peter with some Earnestness, for going about to dissuade him from submitting himself to such Usage, he plainly informs them, that a State of Suffering was so far from being peculiar to himself alone, that they who followed his Doctrine must expect the same, and should therefore take care, by a constant Course of Self-denial, to fit and prepare themselves for it : For, If any Man, says he, will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross, and follow me : For whosoever will save his Life, at present, by renouncing me, and my Doctrine, shall lose it hereafter, in the World to come ; and whoso-

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(l) Prov. xi. 19.

(m) Gal. vi. 8.

ever will lose his Life for my sake now, shall find it improved hereafter into Life eternal. After which come the Words of the Text: *For what is a Man profited, if he shall gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul? Or what shall a Man give in Exchange for his Soul?* And certainly, as a less Evil or Inconvenience is always to be chosen before a greater, and as no Evil can be so great, as we have seen, as the Loss of our Souls, it must therefore be reasonable for us to submit to any other Evil, rather than to free ourselves from it, by running headlong into an infinitely greater. It must, I say, be better for us to sustain any, how great temporal Evils soever, than to forfeit our everlasting Salvation, or suffer the Loss of our Souls, which is inconceivably the greatest Loss that we are at any time capable of suffering, and therefore to be carefully prevented by whatever Methods, and let the attending Inconveniences be what they will; which yet can never be such as to compare with the Loss we avoid by them, or rather the Gain we procure ourselves by submitting to them; it being surely worth any Man's while, not only to abstain from a few unlawful and unmanly Pleasures, or to suffer the Loss of a few unrighteous and forbidden Profits, but even to lose his present Life, should God and his Duty call for it, rather than to lose his everlasting Salvation, and thereby utterly ruin and destroy his Soul;
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since the Loss of the one will admit of an ample Amends, whilst the Loss of the other can admit of none. In short, there cannot be a plainer, or a stronger Motive to engage us to be faithful, even in all Conditions, and to resist, if needful, even unto Blood, than what is contained in the Words that we are now upon, and in those other parallel and momentous Speeches : *Be thou faithful unto Death, and I will give thee a Crown of Life* (n). *And fear not them which kill the Body, but are not able to kill the Soul : But rather fear Him which is able to destroy both Soul and Body in Hell* (o). And, to conclude this Subject ;

In the *Third* and *Last* Place, Let us all hence be exhorted to mind this one thing needful, the taking care of our Souls, those better and nobler Parts of us ; and that we are not tempted to neglect or endanger them by any Profits or Pleasures whatever, that either the World or *Satan* can present before us. For if even the Gain of the whole World is not sufficient to countervail this dreadful Loss, how much less must such an inconsiderable Part of it, as we are any of us likely to get of it ? If therefore we are not to be prevailed on by a Sense of Duty, let us, however, be prevailed on by a Sense of Interest, to have more Regard for our own Good and Welfare, than to sell our Happiness for a thing of nought, and

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(n) *Rev. ii. 10.*(o) *Matt. x. 28.*

lose our Souls for Trifles of a Day ; lest we *mourn at the last, when our Flesh and our Bodies are consumed, and say, How have we hated Instruction, and our Hearts despised Reproof ! And have not obeyed the Voice of our Teachers, nor inclined our Ears unto them that instructed us (p) !* And as we would not lose our Souls, let us take care not to venture them, by yielding to any thing that will endanger their Welfare, though we could procure to ourselves ever so much by it ; for, if we venture them, we are in Danger of losing them ; and, where the Loss is so great and irreparable, it must be the highest Degree of Madness to venture it. Let therefore our Care for our own Welfare teach us at length this Wisdom, to make our Souls our principal and chief Concern, and to prefer their Safety before all Things else. Let this be always highest in our Thoughts, and let it always regulate both our Words and Actions. Let neither the Cares nor Pleasures of this present Life have sufficient Influence to divert us from it : But let us be giving *Diligence, to make our Calling and Election sure (q),* and to *work out our own Salvation with Fear and Trembling,* trusting in God, at the same time, to *work in us both to will and to do of his good Pleasure (r) ;* that so, being made free from Sin, and become the Servants of God, we may

(p) *Prov. v. 11, 12, 13.*(r) *Philip. ii. 12, 13.*(q) *2 Pet. i. 10.*

Serm. VII. *the Loss of the Soul.*

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may have our *Fruit unto Holiness, and the End everlasting Life (s)*. Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting Consolation, and good Hope through Grace, comfort your Hearts, and stablish you in every good Word and Work (t)!

(s) *Rom. vi. 22.*

(t) *2 Theff. ii. ult.*



S E R-



S E R M O N V I I I .

*The peculiar Benefits of an early
Piety.*

Ecclef. xii. 1.

*Remember now thy Creator in the Days of thy
Youth.*

THE Words I have now read, are introduced as by way of Application to what the wise Author had been treating of in the preceding Part of this Book ; in which having insisted largely on the Vanity of all sensual and worldly Enjoyments, he at last closes the Whole with a serious Exhortation to the Fear of God, and a pious Remembrance of our great Creator, as the best Use that could be made of the foregoing Doctrine ; and, in particular,

ticular, recommends such a Practice to be begun betimes, and points out Youth as the fittest and properest Season ; *Remember now thy Creator in the Days of thy Youth.* Such is the Advice and Counsel of this antient Writer, so famed throughout the World for his Wisdom ; and I heartily wish I could add, that it was as justly and duly regarded, as its Nature and Importance require. But, alas ! there needs but a very slender Acquaintance with the rising Generation at present, to convince us this is not the Case ; that they only look upon Youth as a Season adapted to Pleasure, and as what has little or nothing to do with the Rules of Religion, which are only fit, with them, for the declining Age. These are evidently the Maxims which our present Youth seem to walk by ; and it must be owned, that, for the most part, they adhere steadily and constantly to them, and that they are not easily to be dissuaded or diverted from them. That I may, however, cast in the Mite of my Endeavours, to convince such erring Souls of their Error, and to persuade them, if possible, to a wiser Conduct, let me implore their Attention, whilst I briefly lay before them,

In the FIRST Place, What is to be understood by that Remembring their Creator, to which they are here exhorted. After which,

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SECONDLY, I shall endeavour to convince them of the great Reasonableness and Wisdom of their so doing in the Days of Youth. And then,

THIRDLY, and Lastly, Close the Whole with some proper Reflections.

And may that merciful *Father of Lights*, from whom every good and perfect Gift comes down (a), vouchsafe so to attend what shall be now spoken with his Grace and Blessing, as that it may be made effectual to its proper End!

And, FIRST, Let us briefly consider, what is to be understood by Remembling our Creator; or what this Phrase comprehends and implies.

And here, *First*, To remember our Creator, is to have him frequently in our Mind and Thoughts, and to set him as it were always before us, and to consider ourselves as perpetually under the View of his all-seeing Eye, that he sees us where-ever we go, and that his Eye is upon us in whatever we do. Youth is generally too apt to forget God; he is but seldom in all their Thoughts; and therefore the wise Man here calls upon such to remember him, as the first Step to be taken towards obeying him. Nor is this only the Case of Youth, but the too common Condition of those of every

(a) *James i. 17.*

every Age ; our Creator is too little in the Thoughts of all of us ; and it would be better for us all, were we to remember and think of him more, and not suffer him to be absent from our Thoughts so much. But, to go on :

Secondly, To remember our Creator, is seriously to consider, what Sort of a Being he is, and how we ought to behave ourselves to him. It is to consider him both in his natural and his moral Character, as a Being infinitely wise and powerful, and just and righteous, and abundant in Goodness and Truth. It is to consider him as that Being in whom we live and move, and upon whom we are continually dependent for whatever we are or have ; as he who formed us these Bodies, and made us these our Souls ; and who has preserved us, and provided for us, from the Beginning of our Existence till now ; as one who has made us reasonable Creatures for this very Purpose, that we might behave in a reasonable Manner ; as a God who is a Lover of Righteousness, and will hereafter reward it with unending Glories ; but who has the most perfect Abhorrence of every Kind of Iniquity, and will hereafter punish all stubborn and presumptuous Sinners with a most amazing and dreadful Destruction. In a word, it is to remember him as a Being who has given us Laws, whereby we ought to square and regulate our Practice, and who expects such a

Conduct and Behaviour from us. And, to add no more under this Head,

In the *Third* and last Place, To remember our Creator, is also to obey him, and to be and do as he requires we should. And it is this, indeed, which is the Crown of all, and to which all our Remembrance is designed to lead us. For, as it can never be imagined, that the Design of the wise Man, in the Text, was merely to admonish us to be mindful of God in our Thoughts, and, at the same time, to disregard him in our Words and Actions; so the Inference from it must be very plain, that the Remembrance here exhorted to, must be of the same Signification and Import with the Exhortation a few Verses after, to *fear God, and keep his Commandments*; and therefore that the true Intent and Meaning of it is, that we so remember him, as to be mindful of our Duty to him; and so be mindful of our Duty, as to put it in Practice accordingly, humbly imploring his Assistance to enable us so to do; and that he would *fulfil all the good Pleasure of his Goodness, and the Work of Faith with Power* (b). And, in this Sense, to remember our Creator, is but a short Phrase for the Whole of our Duty, for *knowing the God of our Fathers, and serving him with a perfect Heart, and with a willing Mind* (c); for serving him acceptably with Reverence and godly Fear

(b) 2 *Thess.* i. 11.(c) 1 *Chron.* xxviii. 9.

Fear (d); or, as it is expressed more fully in another Passage, for *denying all Ungodliness, and worldly Lusts, and living soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present World (e)*. And that the Phrase of Remembering our Creator is fitly put for the Whole of our Duty, will be sufficiently plain and apparent, if we consider, that it is not only the first Step towards it, but such a Step, as, if properly taken, the other necessary Steps soon follow. After this manner is it represented by our *Saviour*, in the Case of the *prodigal Son (f)*: When he began seriously to bethink him of his Father's House, he immediately takes up a Resolution to return to it; and straitway arises, and goes. And the Case is just the same with regard to other Converts: When they once come to remember their Creator in a proper Manner, to consider what he is, and what he requires from them, and how reasonable it is for them to observe his Dictates, when once they come to see things in a proper Light, they then agree with the Prodigal, to arise, and go to their Father, to join themselves to his Family, and observe his Laws. But, not to insist any longer upon this at present; let us now proceed, as was proposed,

In the SECOND Place, To shew the great Reasonableness and Wisdom of so doing in
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(d) *Heb.* xii. 28.
 xv. 11, &c.

(e) *Titus* ii. 12.

(f) *Luke*

the Days of Youth. And, to this End, let me desire such to consider,

In the *First* Place, That such a Practice will be their greatest *Support* throughout the Whole of Life. You may as yet be Strangers to all worldly Cares, and know nothing of them but by the Hearing of the Ear, and, as is natural to Youth, may be pleasing yourselves with the Forethoughts of a thousand Pleasures, which, in your own Imagination, will attend your riper Years, and when you are once free from those unpleasing, though, I would hope, not improper Restraints, which those who have the Oversight over you may now lay upon you. But you are now but riding, as it were, at Anchor in a quiet Harbour, from whence you must shortly launch out into an unknown Ocean, where you will find more Storms than you may now imagine, and be convinced, by Experience, of that certain Truth, which you are now so hardly drawn to the Belief of, that *Man is born to Trouble as the Sparks fly upward* (g). And think how great a Comfort it will then be to you, to have a God in all Cases to apply to ; to be assured, that every thing shall work together for your final Good (h) ; and that, however troublesome the Pilgrimage be, yet the End shall be pleasant and joyful. These are Comforts which the Unrighteous and the Ungodly know nothing of, but which are the chief

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(g) *Job* v. 7.

(h) *Rom.* viii. 28.

Supports of every pious Mind. Have you never observed, in what a different manner Men are wont to behave themselves in a Day of Trouble? Have you not seen who have filled the Air with Lamentations, and cried *Undone!* to every one around them? And have you not seen others, on the other hand, bear much greater Evils, with a Degree of Patience, which is almost incredible? Would you know the Reason of this different Conduct? The one has Comforts to support him, which the other is utterly void of, even such divine *Consolations* as are far from small (*i*). Let me add, that Religion will not only be a Support to you under all the Evils to which you are incident, but that it will also tend to prevent a great many of them; and that it is the most prudent Course you can possibly take to remember your Creator betimes, as well with regard to this World, as to that to come; as by this you will draw down his Blessing upon all your Actions, and be secured of his Direction and Guidance: Whilst the Youth, who are void of this, are often dashed in Pieces by the Rocks which they foolishly run on; or take such Measures at their first setting out, as they can never after retrieve the ill Effects of. But, to go on:

Secondly, As the Remembring your Creator in the Days of Youth will be the greatest Comfort and Support to you through the Whole

(i) *Job* xv. 11.

Whole of Life, so will it also be your greatest *Comfort* at the Hour of *Death*. You are at present young; and, it may be, in Health and Vigour; but yet you are not ignorant, that you must die as well as others. You know very well, that you are not to live here always, but to be removed by Death as well as other Men. And, as you know you must die, and be removed from this into another Station, only consider with yourselves now, what you will the most earnestly wish for then. Anticipate the Time in your Thoughts, and fancy your Departure at hand; suppose yourselves as lying on a dying Bed: What do you think would be the Import of your Prayers; or what Reflections, do you imagine, would give you the greatest Comfort? Would you say, We could die with more Comfort, if we had but lived in a little more Grandeur, or enjoyed more of the Pleasures of Sin? No; you would then wish for nothing so much as that you had lived in the Fear of God. Had we spent our Lives, would you then think, in his Service, how happy would it now have been for us! We should then have nothing before us but bright and pleasing Prospects, and might bid a chearful *Adieu* to a wicked and troublesome World, and a joyful Welcome to approaching Glory: Whereas now, O dreadful Thought! we have but too much Cause to fear, that we must leave all our Comforts and our Joys behind us, be transported
hence

hence to dark and dismal Regions, the Habitation of unutterable Terrors, and have our Portion assigned us with Sinners, where is *Weeping, and Gnashing of Teeth* (k). These will certainly be your Thoughts, when you come to a dying Hour, should it find you unfit, and enjoying the Use of your Reason: And you would do well to remember, that such a Time must come; and that, however full the World is of Uncertainties with regard to other Matters, yet there is no Uncertainty with respect to this, that *it is appointed unto Men once to die* (l). As ye therefore know before, that such an Hour will come, let it be your timely Endeavour to fit and prepare yourselves for it; and be persuaded to do that now, which ye will then so earnestly wish that ye had done. It is not indeed to be denied, but that more aged Converts may die with Comfort; but yet it is not to be expected, that they should ordinarily die with so much, as they who have devoted their Lives to the Service of God much sooner. And, indeed, how full soever any may be of Comfort, though you may find many repenting they stood out so long, and lost so much of their Time in the Service of Sin and *Satan*; yet will you never find any repenting, that they began their Repentance too soon, or that they *remembered their Creator* too early. But, to go on:

Thirdly,

(k) *Matt. xxiv. ult.*

(l) *Heb. ix. 27.*

Thirdly, Consider also, that it will be much *easier* for you to begin your Repentance *now*, than you have any Reason to expect it ever will *hereafter*. For it is the Nature of Vice, when indulged, to root itself still more firmly; and the longer you continue in the Ways of Sin, the greater and stronger will its Empire be, and the less Power will you have left you to oppose or curb it; one Sin will naturally beget another; repeated Acts will soon be settled Habits, and smaller Evils lead you on to greater, till you perhaps arrive at length at the last Stage of Wickedness, and (which God avert!) come to sit *in the Seat of the Scornful* (m). The plain and natural Consequence of all which is, that it must be easier to accomplish your Repentance now, than, without an extraordinary Degree of Grace, you can ever hope it will be. And how great an Instance then of Folly must it be, to resolve to put off, and to defer a Work, which is, of all others, of the greatest Importance, to a Season, in which the doing it will be only by so much the more difficult, and, I may add, *unlikely* too, as it is distant from the Time which is now present with you? This is so apparent a Truth, that it is but rarely seen, that such as resist the Convictions of Youth, are ever brought to regard them when they grow in Age. For, when Persons grow old in Sin, it becomes as a second Nature; and it is almost

(m) *Psalms* i. 1.

as difficult and impossible to put it off, as for *the Ethiopian to change his Skin, or the Leopard to change his Spots.* How is it else, that so many, when advanced in Years, and who are going apace to their Graves, can yet go on in Sin, with as little or less Concern, than those just entering on the Bloom of Life? Does it not shew their Condition to be very desperate? Does it not plainly evince, that they are sadly hardened? Does it not look, in short, as if the Spirit of God had forsaken them, and given them up in Judgment to their own Hearts Lusts?—And, can ye think of such a State without Horror? Are ye not seized with Trembling at the very Thoughts of it? Take heed then, that this Case be not at last your own; and, to this End, give way to your Convictions in time, and set upon the Work of Repentance immediately, even now in the Days of your Youth, whilst the Spirit of God is ready to assist and help you, and before the Habits of Sin become too much confirmed: Even now, *As the Holy Ghost saith, To-day, if ye will bear his Voice, harden not your Hearts, as in the Provocation, in the Day of Temptation in the Wilderness—But exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day, lest any of you be hardened through the Deceitfulness of Sin (n).* Nor does it only behove you to be excited to an early Piety, from its being easier to practise

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(n) *Heb. iii. 7, 8. 13.*

it now, than what you will find it hereafter ; but it behoves you further to consider,

In the *Fourth Place*, That this *Hereafter* is wholly *uncertain*, and that you know not how soon your *Souls* may be *required* of you. It is true, you seem to stand more fair for *Life*, than those who bend beneath the *Weight* of *Years* ; but yet your *Death* may be as near as theirs ; nor can you any of you say, it is not. And therefore *boast not* yourselves of *To-morrow* ; for you *know not what a Day may bring forth* (o). Even at this very time, for what any of you know to the contrary, some latent *Disease* may be undermining the *Fort* of *Life*. You may breathe out your *Souls* the next *Breath*, or suck in your *Death* with the next *Air* you draw. And what *Madness* therefore must it be in you, to talk of delaying your *Repentance* till *Hereafter*, when the present *Time* is all you can be sure of ; and the *Whole* of that *Hereafter* is a *Matter* quite out of your *Power* ? This very *Day* may possibly be your last ; and you are so far from being able to promise for another *Year*, that you cannot so much as assure yourselves of another *Hour*. How dare you then, thus mortal as you are, and so intirely uncertain of your present *Stay*, shift off *Repentance* to a *Time* hereafter, who cannot assure yourselves of *Life* one *Hour* ? How dare you lay your *Heads* upon your *Pillows*, with all your unre-

(o) *Prov.* xxvii. 1.

unrepented Sins about you, who know not but that before the Morning Twilight, the Space given you for Repentance may be taken from you? You are desirous, I make no question, of dying *the Death of the Righteous*, and that you may have your *last End be like his (p)*; and therefore you design, some time or other hereafter, to set about Religion in earnest. But why must it needs be hereafter? Why should it not rather be now? Can you be sure, that you shall live till that Hereafter comes? Or will you take the Consequence, be it how it will? Consider, I beseech you, what a desperate Part you are acting. You have no Lease of your Lives, any more than others; and you cannot but know, that there are many who die at your Age. You may hope, indeed, it will not be so with you; and so, no doubt, did those who are gone before you: Yet their Hopes deceived them; and why therefore may not yours? Death can easily make its Entrance through a thousand Avenues; nor can you ever be secure from his resistless Stroke, while you continue to sojourn in these Tents of Clay. There is who *dies in his full Strength, being wholly at Ease and Quiet, his Breasts being full of Milk*; or, as the *Septuagint* has it, his Bowels full of Fat; and *his Bones being moistened with Marrow*; as well as who *dies in the Bitterness of his Soul, and never eats with*

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(p) Num. xxiii. 10.

Pleasure (q). Nor are there wanting Reasons why such Persons should die ; for were they once exempted from the Power of Death, or sure of Life till such or such an Age, what Wickedness is there they would not run into ? What Reins could keep them within any Bounds ? And if it is highly fit, that some should die betimes, to raise a Terror in the Minds of others, and move us all to timely Preparation ; who so fit, can you think, to be made such tremendous Examples, as they, who, *being often reprov'd*, will yet go on to *harden their Necks (r)* ; who stop their Ears, like *the deaf Adder*, against all Advice ; and *will not hearken to the Voice of Charmers, charming never so wisely (s)* ? But,

Fifthly, Consider also further, in the next place, that as Youth is not exempted from *Death*, so neither from coming to *Judgment*. This is the Motive the wise Man makes use of, in the latter End of the preceding Chapter. *Rejoice, O young Man, in thy Youth, and let thy Heart cheer thee in the Days of thy Youth, and walk in the Ways of thy Heart, and in the Sight of thine Eyes : But know thou, that, for all these Things, God will bring thee into Judgment (t)*. You, who are old enough to know the Difference between Good and Evil, to distinguish Right from Wrong, and to discern in general what is required from you,

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(q) *Job* xxi. 23, 24, 25. (r) *Prov.* xxix. 1.
(s) *Psf.* lviii. 4, 5. (t) *Eccles.* xi. 9.

as you are by this made moral, and, for that Reason, accountable Agents, so you cannot expect but to be called to Account accordingly. And, as you cannot expect to be excused from Judgment, any more than those of a maturer Age, and have, besides, the same Uncertainty of Life with others, it must therefore behove you so to consider of these Matters now, as that you may be able, when called for, to pass your Accounts with Joy, and to stand approved in that tremendous Day, when *God shall bring every Work into Judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be Good, or whether it be Evil (u)*: When the Dead, both small and great, shall all of them stand before God—and the Sea shall give up the Dead which are in it; and Death and Hades, or the Seats of separate Souls, shall deliver up the Dead which are in them; and they shall be judged every Man according to their Works (w). But, to go on:

Sixthly, Consider likewise the heinous *Provocation* which the delaying your Repentance contains in it, and the great *Sin* and *Wickedness* you therein are guilty of; as it is an abusing God's Patience, in giving you Space for Repentance, and in waiting upon you with the Means of Grace; by using it to no other End, than to lay hold thereby of an Opportunity to increase your Sins, and to provoke him more and more; as if you were resolved

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(u) *Eccles. xii. ult.*

(w) *Rev. xx. 12, 13.*

and determined to try his Patience to the utmost Extent of it, and to see if he will turn it into Wrath, or no. Again, What a base Slight do you hereby put upon his blessed Service, and what an egregious Contempt upon his righteous Laws? As if there was something in his Service so bad, that it was to be deferred as long as possible, and ought never to be entered on without some very urgent and pressing Necessity. Do you not hereby, as it were, plainly tell him, that you know how to spend your Time to better Purpose? And that, notwithstanding the Encomiums he has given such a Practice in his holy Word, yet you must take the Liberty to differ from him, and that you are not so to be imposed on by him? Further, What an open Contempt do you hereby shew to his sacred Authority? He may lay his Commands, if he pleases; but you will do as you will, after all. He may call upon you by his Ministers to repent To-day, and to remember him in the Days of your Youth; but his Authority is of so little Weight with you, that you think it not worth your regarding it. And, lastly, How do you hereby set yourselves as in Defiance of his just Displeasure? And, as it were, tell him, that you mind not his Threatnings; that you stand not in Fear of his Anger; that, let him be ever so angry, you are resolved, that you will take your own Course; that you will choose your Time to repent in yourselves; and that

that he shall not prevail with you to do it sooner? Will you say, These are terrible Words, and that you never reply'd in this manner? It is true, they are terrible Words: But, What does your Conduct say less? Your Lips indeed may not pronounce the *Words*; but all your Actions speak the *Thing* too plainly. It is, in Truth, but the genuine Language of all your Delays in this Matter. Think then how highly provoking such a Behaviour must be to that God, who has bestowed so many Mercies upon you, and is yet waiting with Patience, that he may be gracious. Consider, I say (for it deserves your most serious Attention), how very base and improper such a Conduct must be to your Maker, and how very justly he might consume you in his Anger for it. I shall only add further,

In the *Seventh* and last Place, That there is also this Advantage to be made, by your repenting now, and which you can never retrieve by repenting hereafter, even tho' you should live, which God only knows, so to do; *namely*, that you may hereby make such a superior Proficiency in the Paths of Virtue, and arrive at such superior Attainments, as will very greatly enhance and augment your future Crown. For, "Men who sin on to old Age," to speak the Language of a well-known Author (x), "tho' they prove true
" Penitents

(x) *Sherlock* on Judgment, p. 303.

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In the *Seventh* and last Place, That there is also this Advantage to be made, by your repenting now, and which you can never retrieve by repenting hereafter, even tho' you should live, which God only knows, so to do; *namely*, that you may hereby make such a superior Proficiency in the Paths of Virtue, and arrive at such superior Attainments, as will very greatly enhance and augment your future Crown. For, "Men who sin on to old Age," to speak the Language of a well-known Author (x), "tho' they prove true
" Penitents

(x) *Sherlock* on Judgment, p. 303.

" Penitents at last, can never recover this :
 " For their Time is past, and their youthful
 " Strength and Vigour spent, and the Scene
 " of Action over ; they can never recal
 " Thirty or Forty Years past, in which, if
 " they had improv'd their Time well, they
 " might have done great Service to God and
 " to Religion, and great Good to Men : But
 " those who are beginning their Lives, if
 " they start right at first, and pursue an even
 " and steady Course of Piety and Virtue, if
 " they keep the next World always in their
 " Eye, what Improvements will they make !
 " what rich Treasures and glorious Rewards
 " may they expect from that righteous
 " Judge, *who will render to every Man ac-*
 " *cording to his Works !*"

The most that a Penitent can expect, after
 a long Life spent in Wickedness and Folly,
 is to get to Heaven ; and it is infinite Mercy
 in God, to accept of such Penitents ; but the
 bright and dazling Crowns are reserved for
 those who have spent their Lives well, and
 glorified God on Earth, and finished the
 Work he gave them to do : Such Men will
 triumph at the Conclusion of their Race and
 Warfare, as St. Paul did : *I have fought a*
good Fight, I have finished my Course, I have
kept the Faith : Henceforth is laid up for me a
Crown of Righteousness.

I know this will not affect those Men now
 who love their Sins, and desire to keep them

as long as they can ; they will be very well satisfied, if they can but get to Heaven at last, how mean soever their Station be there ; for they are not so desirous to go to Heaven, as to escape Hell ; and if they can but keep out of Hell, it is all they hope for : But Men must have a greater Spirit, a more divine and generous Temper of Soul, before they can get to Heaven : And, if ever they prove true Penitents, the Loss of so many Opportunities of doing Good, and the Loss of any Degrees of Glory they might have had, will both shame and afflict them : I am sure, the greater Rewards we expect in another World, the greater Degrees of Glory and Happiness, the greater will our Joy and Triumph be. Are not Men in this World as fond of Happiness, as they are afraid of Misery ? Does not a great Mind despise little Things, and aim at what is great ? And is there not as much Reason to aim at the highest Happiness we are capable of in the next World, as well as in this ? This is the noble Prize I would propose to Youth : You are now beginning your Race ; your Day is but in its Dawn : If you rise with the Sun, and work hard all Day, and spend your whole Lives in God's Service, what a great deal of work will you do, and what a proportionably great Reward will you have ! And this will you do, if you make the Thoughts of God and another World familiar to you : This will keep a con-

stant Guard upon your Actions: This will excite and quicken your Industry: This will make you *stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord, as knowing that your Labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.*

Upon the Whole therefore: Let what has been said be a sufficient Incitement to the Youth here present, to *remember* their *Creator*, as the Text directs them. You have been shewn, in some measure, both the Advantages that will attend such a Practice, and the Disadvantages that will attend the Neglect of it. Seetherefore, that ye consider these Matters, as ye should and ought; and remember, that it is only your own Good that you are advised to seek; lest ye mourn in the End, when your Mourning will nothing avail. Think, I say, of these Things, even now in the Days of your Youth; and let not that tempt you to defer or delay it. Many a bright and clear Morning has been long overcast before Noon; and there is a Hell for young Impenitents, as well as old ones. Say not then, that these Things are not fit to be said unto *you*; and that it will be time enough to consider of them *some time hence*: But remember how heinous it is to treat the Most High in this manner; and how much you ought to dread his Judgments, for so doing. You have now a glorious Prize in your Hands: O! see that you make a right Use of it! Let your Morning Travels be in the Road

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to the Heavenly *Canaan*, and devote yourselves to the Service of your God betimes : So will the Noon of Life glide sweetly over your Heads, and your setting Suns be attended with Pleasure and Joy ; and you be crowned at last with such illustrious Crowns as shall shine like the *Sun* in his meridian Splendor, like *the Brightness of the Firmament*, and as *the Stars for ever and ever (y)*. Put not therefore these Glories to the Hazard for a few vain Pleasures ; but cast them all behind you with a brave Disdain ; and let your Souls be fired with a more glorious Ardor, fitly becoming such exalted Hopes. Unending Crowns and Kingdoms are before you : See then that ye so run, as to obtain the Prize ; and, to this End, make the most of the Morning of your Lives you can, that, whatever comes, you may secure your Souls, and pass from hence in a prepared Condition to rise to better and superior Stations ; where Death and Misery shall be known no more ; but Life shall still improve, and Bliss increase.

Let me further observe, before I leave this Subject, that what has been said, should be likewise considered as a yet more forcible Motive to more aged Sinners, to break off their Sins immediately by a true Repentance, and to turn with Speed unto the Lord their God. As for you, Sirs, it is certainly time to look about you ; and, if Repentance is so needful for Youth, it must yet be more need-

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ful

(y) *Mat.* xiii. 43. *Dan.* xii. 3.

ful for you. You have sinned away most of your Time, and have all your Work to do, now your Day is almost at an End, and the Shadows of Night are stealing apace upon you. Rise then, awake with Speed, and strive with Diligence to improve the short uncertain Time before you. Whatever others have, you have surely no Time for Delay; and tho' you can't remember your Creator in the Days of *Youth*, yet you certainly ought to remember him in the Days of your *Age*; and to be highly thankful for his Grace and Goodness, which has pitied and spared you so long. You have, indeed, lost the Opportunities which you might have had; but, blessed be God! your Case is not yet desperate; 'tis yet a Day of Grace, tho' 'tis now drawing near to an End. If you have therefore any Concern for your eternal Welfare, sleep not another Night without Repentance; but even now resolve on the important Work, which must be quickly done, or it will be else too late. You might now already have been fit for Happiness: The Heat of the Day should have been over with you; and your Work, instead of not being yet begun, ought at this Season to have been well nigh finished. Mourn then your mis-spent Life with Shame and Sorrow, and fly with Speed to God, through Christ, for Mercy. Consider well, your Sun is almost down, and little of the Day-remains before you:

you: Be persuaded then to improve the small Remainder; and, having taken so much Pains for Destruction, take a little at last to prevent the awful and tremendous Sentence, to avert that dreadful and indignant Wrath, which you have all your Lives long been incurring, and which, if not prevented by a speedy Repentance, will ere long overwhelm you to your utter Ruin. Consider, I say, your Day is now far spent, your Night is near at hand, and the Work before you of the last Importance: It therefore highly behoves you to labour and work for your Lives, and to make the best Use of your Time, (calling God to your Aid) you are able. And let me earnestly intreat you, that you would not be so foolish at last, as to think it time enough to repent, when you find yourselves sick, or a dying. For there is a great deal of Reason to think, that such a Repentance will not be accepted; and very little, if any, to hope or expect, that it will. For, *Because I have called, saith the Divine Wisdom, and ye refused, I have stretched out my Hand, and no Man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my Counsel, and would none of my Reproof; I also will laugh at your Calamity, I will mock when your Fear cometh; when your Fear cometh as Desolation, and your Destruction cometh as a Whirlwind; when Distress and Anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they*

190 *The peculiar Benefits, &c. Serm. VIII.*
they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me (z). And, If the evil Servant, says our Saviour, shall say in his Heart, My Lord delayeth his Coming ; and shall begin to smite his Fellow-Servants, and to eat and drink with the Drunken ; the Lord of that Servant shall come in a Day when he looketh not for him, and in an Hour that he is not aware of ; and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his Portion with the Hypocrites : There shall be Weeping, and Gnashing of Teeth (a). Consider what has been said, and the Lord give you Understanding in all Things !

(z) *Prov. i. 24, &c.*

(a) *Mat. xxiv. ult.*





S E R M O N IX.

Of the Impossibility of serving Two Masters.

Matt. vi. 24.

No Man can serve two Masters ; for either he will hate the one, and love the other ; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other : Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.

IT will, I hope, be sufficient to engage your Attention to the Words I have just now read, only to remind you that they are no other than the Words of that *Christ* of God, whom we all profess to look upon as our Lord and Saviour, and are under the strongest Obligations to believe in all Things. He had been exhorting his Hearers, but a very few *Verses* before, not to lay up for themselves *Treasures upon Earth, where Moth and Rust*

Rust corrupt, and where Thieves break through and steal ; but to lay up for themselves Treasures in Heaven, which are subject to none of these Accidents ; because, where their Treasure was, there would their Hearts be also. If ye are desirous, it is as if he said, to obtain God's Favour, and to lay up a good Foundation for the Time to come, that ye may lay hold on eternal Life ; if ye are any-way solicitous after that Temper of Mind, which is necessary to fit you for an Admission into that Kingdom, to which I invite you ; do not be too eager or solicitous after laying up Treasures on Earth, which, besides that they are far from being durable, or of any lasting or certain Continuance, will be likewise a Let and Impediment to your laying up Treasures in Heaven. For as, where your Treasure is, there your Hearts will be also ; so, if your Hearts are once set upon this World, you will hardly think much of another, which yet undoubtedly merits to be thought of most. *The Light of the Body, as our Lord proceeds, is the Eye : If therefore thine Eye be single, if it is right, and as it should be, thy whole Body shall be full of Light. But if thine Eye be evil, thy whole Body shall be full of Darknes.* And as it is thus with the Eye of the Body, so is it also with the Eye of the Mind ; to which our Saviour here alludes, and which is the same to the Soul, as the external Eye is to the Body. If therefore the Eyes of your
Minds

Minds are in a right Condition, if they are fixed on proper Objects, and are able to see Things in their proper Colours ; your Souls will be full of Light, and you will be enabled to walk in the Light. But if your Eyes are evil, if your Minds are vitiated by wrong Affections, if they are fixed and settled on improper Objects, and are not able to penetrate through their false Disguises, you will walk in Darkness, and the Light of Life will be hid from your Eyes. And if that Light, which should steer you, and direct your Conduct, is itself overcast and corrupted, what a dismal Condition must you needs be in ? And how much therefore must it behove you, that your Light be clear, and that you fix the Eyes of your Minds upon their proper Objects, upon *laying up Treasures in Heaven* ; and that you do not suffer yourselves to be blinded by Ambition, or Pleasure, or Covetousness, and have your Eyes fixed upon nothing but *laying up Treasures on Earth* ? Which, as it is utterly inconsistent with the Christian Character, so will it effectually unfit you for the Christian Happiness. For, I assure you, says our Saviour, that *no Man can serve Two Masters* ; that is, whose Interests are opposite to one another ; as is the Case between God and the World. Where Two indeed will the same Things, it is as easy to serve Two as One. But in the Case of two opposite Masters, Obedience to both is impos-

fible. For he must either *hate the one, and love the other*, he must either dislike and forsake the *first*, in order to love and cleave to the *second*; or else he must *hold to the first*, and so *despise the second*; which is so exactly the Case with regard to *God and Mammon*, that if the one be our Master, we must of course despise and disregard the other; it being utterly impossible to serve Two such contrary Masters at one and the self-same time; as will be sufficiently apparent, if we only consider what it is to serve God, or what that Service is which he requires from us.

There are but few indeed in a Land of Light, like ours, but what know in the general, that to serve God, is to keep his Commandments; and that, in order to this, we must live as becometh the Gospel, which is the Rule and Pattern that we have to guide us. But then, there is a great deal of Difference between knowing this in the general, and knowing more particularly what it is which the Gospel requires from us, and how far it is necessary for us to comply with, and conform to its Dictates, before God will accept us as his faithful Servants; which is much more than is commonly thought of. It is Foundation enough, for the most to call themselves Servants of God, that they believe in his Son, and keep clear from the grosser Enormities; though the World at the same time has the Dominion over them, and the

chief

chief Current of their Affections is drawn out that Way. But, if we would bring this Matter to a proper Tryal, we must bring it to the Law, and to the Testimony, which is the only proper Judge in all Causes or Claims of this Nature; nor will any other Judgments stand, but such as are consonant with it.

That we may therefore never be deceived in a Matter of this Importance, and see the Force and Cogency of our Saviour's Reasoning, and how much it behoves us to be influenced and directed by it; let us set ourselves seriously to inquire from the Rules of the Gospel itself, what it is to serve God in a becoming manner, or what that Service is; which he requires, and looks for, and will alone accept to our eternal Welfare? And here, if we look but a few *Verses* forwards (*a*), we shall find our Saviour exhorting his Hearers, that they would *seek first the Kingdom of God, and his Righteousness*;—that they would seek it *first*, that is, in the first and the principal Place, and so as to make all other Interests to bow down before it. If therefore we would seek it aright, and according to our Saviour's Direction, we must see, that we seek it in the *first* Place; that we do not pursue it as a thing by the bye, in a *secondary* and indifferent manner; but that we make it our *first* and principal Concern, our chief and *primary* Care, to obtain it: Yea, so as that

(*a*) Verse 33,

we are resolved to obtain it even at all Adventures; and tho' we should not only lose every thing else, but also our Lives in Pursuit of it. Let the World and Mammon present all their Charms, yet *the Kingdom of God, and his Righteousness*, must still be preferred before all; nor will such Seekers be ever successful, over whom the Shine of Mammon has a greater Influence, than all the Joys of an eternal Heaven. For with what manner of Propriety can he be called a Servant of God, who will wilfully disobey him at the Instigation or Temptation of the World? Are they deemed faithful Servants with Men, who will sooner hearken to the Commands of a Stranger, than to those of their own proper Masters? Or can the Truth of that Rule, which is laid down by St. Paul, be disputed; that *to whom we yield ourselves Servants to obey his Servants we are, to whom we obey; whether it be of Sin unto Death, or of Obedience unto Righteousness*, or Justification of Life (b)? There is evidently no other Way, by which a Point of this Kind can be settled. If we would therefore approve ourselves as Servants of God, we have no other way so to do, if the Gospel itself may be credited, than by a ready Obedience to all his Commands and Injunctions. If we should be commanded, with the *young Man* in the Gospel (c), to go and sell all that we have, and give to the

Poor;

(b) *Rom. vi. 16.*
and *Luke xviii. 22.*

(c) *Mat. xix. 21. Mark x. 21.*

Poor ; if we would shew ourselves Servants of God, we must immediately go and perform it, or our Refusal will shew us, as it did him, to be no other than a Servant of *Mammon* ; and to have more regard for that, than we have for him that made us.

It is true, every Man is not commanded to do as that young Man was ; but yet, as every Man is expressly required to yield Obedience to all God's Commandments, he must by that be obliged to be ready and willing to do so, should God think it fit to require it ; just as every Man is not called to suffer actual Martyrdom, though it is, no doubt of it, every Man's Duty, so far to attain the same Temper, as to be ready and willing to submit to suffer it, should the Cause of God and Truth require it from him. For though the Service of God is of that Nature as to stand with many unwilling Infirmities, yet will it by no means consist with wilful and presumptuous Sinning, let the Temptations to our doing so be what they will ; but both ourselves, and all that we have, must be at God's Disposal, or he will never account us to belong to his Servants. And therefore the Man, whose Love to the World makes him negligent and remiss in his Duty, leads him wilfully to indulge in forbidden Pleasures, or to withhold and retain, where Religion requires him to be free and liberal, though he may think himself a Servant of God from

from his Compliance with some of those Duties, which God in his Gospel commands him; yet is he still evidently a Servant of the World and Mammon, as his Conduct shews, when it comes to the pinch, that he prefers that before God, and his Duty. He may have some Inclinations to Goodness, some serious Thoughts of God, and some Esteem for the *Pearl of great Price*, though far from enough to obtain it (*d*). He may, in short, be willing to serve God, while he can serve him, and the World, both together: But at the same time he is not willing to be happy, at so dear a Rate; or to part with so much for that Purpose, as the holy Oracles tell him he must do. And this is that indeed, which deceives the Generality of Professors: They are content, with *Herod*, to do many Things gladly (*e*); and are therefore apt to conclude from thence, their State is very good: But when they come to any thing harder than ordinary, to any thing that is difficult and unpleasing to Flesh and Blood, when they are required to part with their *Herodias*, their beloved and darling Iniquities, they immediately stop their Career; and though they are willing to serve God in some easier Matters, yet they cannot bring themselves to obey him in these: Whereas God looks upon none as his Servants, but such as are ready and willing to serve and obey him

(*d*) *Mat.* xiii. 45, 46.(*e*) *Mark* vi. 20.

in all things, and to persevere and continue, human Frailties excepted, to do so; not only to the Loss of Substance, but of Life itself, should they be ever called by Providence so to do.

Will you tell me, that these are hard Laws, and too hard to be established as necessary? I can assure you, that the Laws are not mine, but the Laws of *Christ* himself; which it is therefore neither in mine, nor in any Man's Power to alter. It is in our Power, indeed, if we please, to misrepresent them: But of what Advantage, I beseech you, can it be to any of us, to represent Things otherwise than they really are? Should the Way to Happiness be *known*, or *unknown*? Can any thing else but *Service*, make Men *Servants*? Can any thing else than *Goodness*, make them *Good*? Or can any thing, save *Fidelity*, make them *Faithful*? But, however, consult his own Words, and see if they are capable of a milder Meaning.

He that loveth Father or Mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth Son or Daughter more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his Life, shall lose it; and he that loseth his Life for my sake, shall find it (f). Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross, and follow me:

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(f) *Mat. x. 37, 38, 39.*

For whosoever will save his Life, shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his Life for my sake, and the Gospel's, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a Man, if he shall gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul? Or what shall a Man give in Exchange for his Soul? Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me, and of my Words, in this adulterous and sinful Generation; of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the Glory of his Father, with the holy Angels (g). If any Man come to me, and hate not his Father, and Mother, and Wife, and Children, and Brethren, and Sisters, yea, and his own Life also, he cannot be my Disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his Cross, and come after me, cannot be my Disciple: For which of you, intending to build a Tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the Cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the Foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it, begin to mock him, saying, This Man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what King, going to make War against another King, sitteth not down first, and consulteth, whether he be able with Ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with Twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an Embassy, and desireth Conditions of Peace. So likewise, whosoever

(g) Mark viii. 34—38.

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whoſoever he be of you, that forſaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my Diſciple (h).

I ſhall neither go about to paraphraſe theſe Words myſelf, or to give you any Comment upon them from others, but leave you to judge of them juſt as they are, that I may afford you no Shadow of Reason, or ſo much as the leaſt Pretence to ſuſpect me of endeavouring to prevert the Senſe of them. I ſhall only beg you to conſider, that they are no other than the Words of that Judge of all Mankind, before whoſe Bar you muſt all of you ſtand, and upon whoſe Judgment your Fates muſt depend; and, as ſuch, the Words of a Perſon, who muſt of conſequence know what he ſays, and who or what fort of Perſons he will either acquit or condemn. Conſider therefore ſeriously, that theſe are the Laws of *Chriſt*, expreſſed in his own very Words; and ſee that ye regard and receive them accordingly, not as the Words of Men, but as the Words of God. If ye pretend to ſerve him, ye ſee what it is he requires; and that he will acknowledge none as his Servants upon other Terms. And can ye reaſonably think or imagine, that he who will not ſuffer you to diſobey him, though to ſave your Lives, will yet wink at your doing ſo upon leſs Occaſions? that he will allow you to forſake him for a little *Mammon*, and yet accept you, notwithstanding, as his faithful Servants? If indeed ye

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are determined to think so, go on, and take the Consequence; but if ye will but believe his own Words, ye can never think any such thing.

He is not indeed so hard or austere a Master as not to put up with the unavoidable, disallow'd of Frailties of such as serve him with an honest and an upright Mind; but, as for wilful and presumtuious Transgressions, let either the Love of the World, or the Fear of the World, be their Motive, such Transgressions as these he has threatened to punish with Death, and with an everlasting Destruction from his blessed Presence. And though it is not to be expected but that Sin will remain in his Servants, while they continue to sojourn in a sinful World, yet he will not allow them to serve it, or to let it reign there. Neither the World nor Sin must ever pretend to reign where he has once set up his Throne. Two such opposite Kingdoms can never subsist in one Heart. Two such opposite Masters can never be served at one Time. *Whatsoever is born of God*, as St. John tells us, *Overcometh the World* (i); and *whosoever abideth in him, sinneth not* (k); that is, in a wilful, deliberate, and presumtuious manner. For he that sins in this manner for any Advantage or Profit whatever, renounces God, and sells his Soul for Gain.

A Servant of God must be so far, therefore, from serving the World, that it is the very

Business

(i) 1 John v. 4.

(k) 1 John iii. 6.

Business that is set him, to subdue and conquer it; nor is it a matter of Indifference whether he does or no, but a matter, on the contrary, of the last Importance. For as not all who run in a Race receive the Prize, but he only who gaineth the Victory (l); so the Promises are not to all who inlist themselves under *Christ's* Banner, but only to such as fight so as to overcome. *He that hath an Ear to hear*, says our Lord, *Let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the Tree of Life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God. — He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second Death. — To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden Manna. — And he that overcometh, and keepeth my Works unto the End, to him will I give Power over the Nations (m). — And again, He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white Raiment. — Him that overcometh will I make a Pillar in the Temple of my God. — And To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my Throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his Throne (n).* And to the same Purpose, *He that overcometh, saith the Almighty, shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my Son. But the Fearful and Unbelieving, those who boggle at Hardships, and refuse to obey when God calls them to diffi-*

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(l) 1 Cor. ix. 24. (m) Rev. ii. 7. 11. 17. 26. (n) Rev. iii. 5. 12. 21.

cult Trials, *and the Abominable, and Murderers, and Whoremongers, and Sorcerers, and Idolaters*, those that make any thing their God besides the God of Heaven, those who have more regard for either Profit or Pleasure, than they have for his Worship and Favour, *and all Liars*, all those that will deviate from the Ways of Truth to serve worldly or sinister Ends, all these *shall have their Part in the Lake which burneth with Fire and Brimstone : Which is the Second Death* (o). You see here what a Stress is laid upon our Overcoming, and how absolutely necessary it is, according to the Doctrine of Scripture, for the Servants of God so to do ; and, consequently, how impossible it must be, in the very Reason and Nature of Things, to serve God and the World at one and the self-same time. We are not indeed tied up from using the World. It was made for that Purpose, nor is there any possible living without it. But then, while we use it in the Way of our Duty, while we never suffer it to be predominant, or to gain the Ascendency over us, we do not serve the World, but make the World serve us. While, I say, it has no such Influence upon us, as to make us wilfully neglect our Duty, while the Voice of God is the only Voice that rules us, and it is not in the Power of the World to draw us wilfully contrary to it ; this is not serving the World,

(o) Rev. xxi. 7, 8.

World, but serving God, and using the World in such a manner as God has commanded, not as our Lord and Master, or to whom we yield ourselves Servants to obey, but as a Servant itself, made only to minister to our Wants and Necessities, as the Maker thereof has appointed; and so far therefore as the World is only used in this Manner, it is used *as not abusing it* (p). But if, on the contrary, our Love of the World takes up all our Time and Care, if it is the chief End of all our Endeavours to be rich in this Life, and we are either utterly negligent, or, at best, very cold and indifferent, as to what relates to the Service of God, we are no other than the Servants of the World and Mammon, and the true Service of God is not in us. For such a Love and Inclination to the World as this, is utterly inconsistent with the Christian Character, which requires a quite different Temper, and a quite contrary Bias of Soul (q). But I shall now add no more as to the Truth of this Assertion; but proceed to close with a brief Application.

And, *First*, Is it impossible for us to *serve God and Mammon*? Then let us inquire which it is, that we do serve. An Inquiry, certainly, of the last Importance, and in which our Interest is very highly concerned. And here would we know, who it is that we serve, let us consider who it is we obey. Has then
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(p) 1 Cor. vii. 31.

(q) 1 John ii. 15.

God, or the World, the chief Room in our Hearts and Affections? Whose Favour and Friendship do we most prefer? And which of the Twain has the most Influence over us? Can we say, with the Psalmist, *Whom have we in Heaven, O Lord God, but Thee?* And there is none upon Earth, that we desire in Comparison with Thee (r). Are we ready to run, where God and our Duty call us; and fully determined, whatever it costs us, and to how many Difficulties soever it may expose us, that we will still make it our Care, by the Aids of his Grace, to serve God, and to be faithful to him even to *Death*, if so be we may at any rate be thought worthy of that *Crown of Life*, which he has promised to *them that love him* (s)? Have we any-thing of that Temper of Mind, which was found in those antient *Worthies*, who chose rather to suffer *Affliction with the People of God*, than to enjoy the *Pleasures of Sin for a Season*?—Who were tortured, not accepting Deliverance; that they might obtain a better Resurrection. Who had Trial of cruel Mockings and Scourgings; yea, moreover, of Bonds and Imprisonment: Who were stoned, were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the Sword: Who wandered about in Sheep-skins and Goat-skins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented (of whom the World was not worthy): Who wandered in Deserts, and in Mountains, and in

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(r) Psalm lxxiii. 25.

(s) James i. 12.

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Dens and Caves of the Earth (t). Are we willing to *suffer* with *Christ*, if need be, if so be we may *reign* with him? Can we deny ourselves, and take up our Cross, and follow him? Or are we of the Number of those, who know not how to endure any Hardship; and who, as soon as Tribulation arises, or our Duty exposes us to any Inconveniencies, immediately shift the Scene, and quit the Service? If the former of these be the Case, we may bid our Souls be of good Chear; for *the Kingdom of Heaven* is our own. But if, on the contrary, we are conscious of the latter, if we know not how to *follow the Lamb* (u) in rough and thorny Ways; if our Religion will not stand it against Winds and Storms; if we are prevailed on to forsake it for the Love of Ease, or Pleasure, or Profit; if we will sooner lye and dissemble, and agree to violate the Laws of God, than forego some little temporal Advantages; if, notwithstanding our Devotion in the *Church*, we are still guilty of Lying and Extortion, when behind the *Counter*; all our Religion is useles, and of no Significance; we are the Slaves and Servants of unrighteous *Mammon*; nor will God ever accept us as his, till by a hearty Repentance we turn truly and unfeignedly to him, are content to serve him as his Word requires, and to submit like good Servants to whatsoever he shall please to command us, even though

(t) *Heb.* xi. 25. 35—38.(u) *Rev.* xiv. 4.

though to the apparent Hazard of our Lives and Fortunes, as knowing in whom we have believed; and that he is both able and willing to make us an ample Amends. But, to go on :

Secondly, Is it impossible for us to *serve God and Mammon*? Then, as we have any regard for our Souls, let us get weaned Affections from all worldly Things. If we would be Servants of God, and there is no other way to be happy, we must look above this World. We must not expect to be rewarded here; but must be content, even through many Tribulations, to enter into the Kingdom of God. We must expect, whilst here, to encounter with many Hardships; and still go on and persist in well-doing, even though we meet but with pitiful and poor Requitals, as considering that our Reward in so doing shall be great in Heaven. And, to this End, we must learn to despise, and look beyond this World, that so none of these Things may be able to move us, or to divert us from the Ways of our Duty. We must learn, with the *Apostle*, not to look so much at *Things seen*, which are but *temporal*, as at those Things which are *unseen*, and *eternal* (w); must consider ourselves as Pilgrims and Strangers, who have here *no continuing City*; but, that are *seeking one to come* (x); and learn to look on the World, just as Travelers do on their

(w) 2 Cor. iv. ult.

(x) Heb. xiii. 14.

their Inns; where, if they have but enough for their present Conveniencies, they are no-way apt to be solicitous or anxious about any-thing more. We must consider, that our Happiness does not so much depend upon what we *have*, as it does upon what we *do*; and that it is therefore but of very little Importance, how we live in this World, if we but so live as to be happy in the next. He that sets out in Religion with such a Temper and Disposition as this, and, *having Food and Raiment*, is *there-with content* (y), bids fair for a prosperous and successful Voyage; but he that sets out too heavily laden, and too much clogged with worldly Affections, is in great Danger of sinking in the Seas of eternal Perdition. As ye have therefore any Concern for your eternal Welfare, see that ye sit loose, and as becomes you, to all worldly Things. Remember the Saying of the Apostle Paul, that *the Love of Money is the Root of all Evil* (z); and bear it always in Mind, that *no Man can serve two Masters*; and that it is impossible for you to *serve God and Mammon*. But I shall now shut up all with those remarkable Words of our Saviour, in the latter End of the succeeding Chapter; and with which he ends his Discourse on the Mount; of which the Words of our Text are a Part: *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doth the*

E e

Will

(y) 1 Tim. vi. 8.

(z) Ibid. Ver. 10.

Will of my Father, which is in Heaven. Many will say to me in that Day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy Name? And in thy Name have cast out Devils? And in thy Name done many wonderful Works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: Depart from me, ye that work Iniquity. Therefore, whosoever heareth these Sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise Man, which built his House upon a Rock; and the Rain descended, and the Floods came, and the Winds blew, and beat upon that House, and it fell not; for it was founded upon a Rock. And every one that heareth these Sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish Man, which built his House upon the Sand; and the Rain descended, and the Floods came, and the Winds blew, and beat upon that House, and it fell; and great was the Fall of it.

Consider what has been said, and may the Lord give you Understanding in all Things, both to know and to do his Will! To whom be Honour and Glory, both now and for ever! *Amen.*



S E R M O N X.

Of the Religious Use of Astronomy.

Pfalm viii. 3, 4.

When I consider thy Heavens, the Work of thy Fingers; the Moon and the Stars, which thou hast ordained: What is Man that thou art mindful of him? And the Son of Man, that thou visitest him?

AS for the Author of this Psalm, we are informed by the *Title*, it is a Psalm of David; but when, or on what Occasion, composed by him, is a Matter of Doubt and Uncertainty. There are some who imagine, from the *Second Verse* of it, *Out of the Mouth of Babes and Sucklings hast thou ordained Strength, because of thine Enemies, that thou mightest still the Enemy, and the Avenger*, that it was composed by him, as a Psalm of Thanksgiv-

ing for his Victory over *Goliath*, who defied the Armies of the living God ; and in Comparison with whom he himself was as a Babe, and a Suckling (*a*). But as there is nothing else throughout the whole Psalm, which seems to look that way, and as these Words are quoted by our Saviour in a different Sense (*b*), this Opinion must at best be uncertain. There are others again, who suppose it to be an Evening Meditation, while he was keeping his Father's Sheep in the Plains of *Bethlehem* ; and this is grounded on the Words of our Text, where he makes express Mention of the Moon and Stars, but takes no notice at all of the Sun. And indeed it is not improbable, for the aforesaid Reason, that this Psalm was composed in the Evening ; as the *Nineteenth* seems to have been in the Morning, where express Mention is made of the Sun, while the Moon and the Stars are omitted : But then, where, or at what Age, it was composed by him, there is nothing in the Words of the Psalm that will give us any Insight. And therefore, not to concern ourselves further with a Matter more dark than important, let us come to the Intention of the Work itself, which is, very plainly to set forth and illustrate the great Glory of God in his Works, and, in a more particular Manner, in his Love to Man. But here a new Difficulty arises, as to what the *Psalmist* means by *Man* ; and whether we are to

(*a*) 1 Sam. xvii.(*b*) Matt. xxi. 16.

to understand by it Man in general, or only the *Man Christ Jesus*.

Were one to go no further than the Psalm itself, one would naturally think, at first Sight, that the *Psalmist* looked no further than to the original State of Man, and the sovereign Dominion with which he was then endowed over the Works of the inferior Creation; but, if we look into the *New Testament*, we shall find it to have been penned with a more Christian Spirit, and that the *Psalmist* really saw further than one would be apt at first View to imagine. The first Passage in which we find it referred to, is in the *Twenty-first* Chapter of *Matthew*; where we read, that *Jesus went into the Temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the Temple; and overthrew the Tables of the Money-changers, and the Seats of them that sold Doves; and said unto them, It is written, My House shall be called the House of Prayer; but ye have made it a Den of Thieves. And the Blind, and the Lame, came to him in the Temple; and he healed them. And when the chief Priests and Scribes saw the wonderful Things that he did, and the Children crying in the Temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David! they were sore displeased, and said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea, have ye never read, Out of the Mouth of Babes and Sucklings thou hast PERFECTED PRAISE? For so our Lord, and the Septuagint, translate that Passage.*

Passage. And from hence some have imagined, that this *Second Verse* was therefore propheticall of that Event. But it is to be observed, at the same time, that our Saviour does not say, as he commonly does when he refers to any antient Predictions, that this was done, that such a Scripture might be fulfilled, or that the Saying of the *Psalmist* was hereby accomplished; and that therefore his referring to it here is by no means a positive Proof, that the Words of *David* referred to that Action; but only, that that Action of the Children was such, as to which those Words of the *Psalmist* might be very justly and fitly applied. As if he had said, Have ye never remarked, what was long ago observed by the Royal Psalmist *David*, that the Glory of God was so great, and so visibly to be seen in his Works, as to force even the Mouths of Babes and Sucklings to proclaim his Praises? Let it not therefore seem strange, if I tell you, that as God has often made use of such Instruments to shew forth his Praises before, so this is but an Instance of that Nature now; the Hand of God being so plain and apparent in these miraculous Works which I do, that even your Children cannot but see and acknowledge it.

But this is not the only Place, in which the *New Testament* refers to this Psalm: It is yet more largely referred to by the Apostle *Paul*, in the *Second Chapter* of his *Epistle* to the
Hebrews;

Hebrews (c); and that in such a manner, as shews it to be prophetical of something future; not indeed, as it may seem at first Glance, of the *then future* Exaltation of *Christ* with regard to the Times of *David*, but of a *yet future* Exaltation of the Creature *Man*, as foretold by the Prophets, in the *World to come*. He had been discoursing, in the *First Chapter* of the said *Epistle*, of the Superiority of *Christ* above the holy Angels, who, though once made Rulers of the World themselves, yet had now, in Obedience to the great Creator, resigned their several Crowns to God's *Messiah*, and owned him Lord of all in Earth and Heaven. And from hence he infers, in the Beginning of the *Second Chapter*, that *Therefore we ought to give the more earnest Heed to the Things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the Word spoken, says he, by Angels (or the Jewish Law) was stedfast, and every Transgression and Disobedience received a just Recompence of Reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great Salvation? Which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them Witness, both with Signs and Wonders, and with divers Miracles, and Gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own Will: For unto the Angels hath he not put in Subjection that which is stiled in Scripture the*
World

(c) Heb. ii. 6, 7.

World (or Age) to come (d), or that glorious State of Things, whereof we speak. This, says the Apostle, is not subject to Angels, as was the Case of the Jewish Oeconomy; but is, on the contrary, such a State of Salvation, as in which Man himself shall be raised to such Honour, as to be but little inferior to Angels, and be again invested with that ancient Dominion, which was given him by God at the first; as was long ago foreseen and foretold by the Prophet David, who, in a certain Place, testified, saying, What is Man, that thou art mindful of him? Or the Son of Man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him (but) a little lower than the Angels; thou crownedst him with Glory and Honour, and didst set him over the Works of thy Hands. Thou hast put all (terrestrial) things in Subjection under his Feet. For in that he put all in Subjection under him, he left nothing not put under him. But now we see not yet all (earthly) things put under him. We see not Man himself AS YET honoured with any such Dignity. But we see him thus crowned and honoured in Christ his Head. We see Jesus, says the Apostle, who was made a little lower than the Angels, for the Suffering of Death, crowned with Glory and Honour. We see the Captain of our Salvation thus honoured, and highly exalted; and therefore need not to make any Doubt, but that his

Followers

(d) See the Septuagint Version of *Isaiab ix. 6.* and the *Greek of Luke xx. 35.* and *Heb. vi. 5.*

Followers shall also be so in their Time and Place; or in that *World* or Age to come before referred to; when they shall be so far from being subject to Angels, that they shall be like unto Angels themselves (e), and have all inferior Beings put in Subjection under them. For if we are *Children* of God, says the Apostle, then *Heirs, Heirs of God, and joint Heirs with Christ* (f), who is appointed *Heir of all Things* (g).

And that this is really the Sense of the Place, must I think be apparent from the Words themselves. For, as it could hardly be said of *Adam* in his State of Innocence, *What is Man, that thou art mindful of him?* and much less, *What is wretched Man?* as the Word **אנוש** *Enosh* properly signifies, thereby evidently pointing at his fallen Condition; as this could not, I say, with any Propriety be said of *Adam* in his State of Innocence, and while he continued in the Image of God; so with as little Propriety could it ever be said of *Christ*, with whom the Father was always well pleased, *What is Man, that thou art mindful of him?*

It follows then, that by *Man* in our Text we are to understand the *Psalmist* of Mankind in general, not considered as innocent, but as fallen and sinful; nor yet simply as fallen, but as redeemed and recovered by *Christ*, and crowned with Glory and Honour through

F f

Him;

(e) *Luke* xx. 35. (f) *Rom.* viii. 17. (g) *Heb.* i. 2.

Him; and that it is from these Views that he celebrates the Love of God in the manner he does in this Psalm; which seems to be plainly a devout Meditation, not only of the Glory of God, as displayed in his Works of *Creation*, but also in his Works of Grace and of *Redemption* too; and to have a special Reference to that glorious Time, when, as the *Psalmist* has elsewhere declared, *The Meek shall inherit the Earth, and shall delight themselves in the Abundance of Peace* (b); and, as it is expressed by the Angel to the Prophet *Daniel*, *The Saints shall take the Kingdom, and possess it for ever, even for ever and ever—And the Kingdom and Dominion, and the Greatness of the Kingdom under the whole Heaven, shall be given to the People of the Saints of the Most High* (i); or, to use the Language of the Saints themselves, when they shall be *Kings and Priests to God, and reign on the Earth* (k).

Let us then consider the Psalm in this Light; and let us imagine the *Psalmist* at first, as taking a general Survey of the Universe; upon which he breaks out into this Exclamation, *O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy Name in all the Earth! who hast set thy Glory above the Heavens*; and which is so visibly to be seen in thy Works, that even *Babes and Sucklings* cannot but sing thy Praises, to the Confusion of thine Enemies, and the furious

Opposers

(b) *Psalm xxxvii. 11.* (i) *Dan. vii. 18. 27.* (k) *Rev.*

Opposers of thy Name and People. After which, fixing his Attention in a more particular manner on the Heavens, and considerately viewing their amazing Structure, adorned and beautified with Moon and Stars, he is even reduced to an Ecstasy of Admiration, that the great Lord and Owner of that beautiful Frame should yet make so great Account of fallen and sinful Man, as to send his Son from Heaven for his Redemption, and through Him to honour his Nature in the manner he after describes: *When I consider thy Heavens, the Work of thy Fingers; the Moon and the Stars, which thou hast ordained; What is Man, that thou art mindful of him; and the Son of Man, that thou visitest him?* He did not look at the Heavens with a slight and careless Eye; but he seriously and diligently considered them, he curiously inspected them, as the original Word here signifies; and the Result of this his curious Inspection was, that he could not help seeing Reason to wonder that God should set such a Value upon Man: *When I consider thy Heavens, the Work of thy Fingers — What is Man, that thou art mindful of him; and the Son of Man, that thou visitest him?*

But here, it is likely, you will be ready to ask, Why he should express himself after any such manner of a Creature made in the Image of God? Why he should speak of him in such contemptible Terms? and degrade him

so low, as even to suppose him inferior to the Moon and Stars? Why those things which were made for his Use, should be thus preposterously preferred above him? How inanimate Fires should be more excellent than a rational Being, endowed with Wisdom and Understanding, and with the Knowledge of him who made all Things? And, in short, how it can follow from the Heavens, or the Moon and Stars, that Man is a little and diminutive Creature? Since the considering them as made for his Use, must, one would think, have a different Tendency, and rather have led him to cry out, on the other hand, *How noble a Being must that Creature be, for whose sake all this wonderful Frame, and these magnificent Works, were prepared!*

But the *Psalmist* seems to have seen things in a different Light. He could find nothing in the Heavens that had any Tendency to flatter Man's Pride; but rather to teach him a becoming Humility. He could find nothing, we see, that tended to exalt and magnify, but, on the contrary, to humble and abase his Vanity, and to teach him to think of himself soberly, as he ought to think. And there is no Doubt but that the *Psalmist* had good Reasons for making this Inference, if we can but be so happy as to find them out. Let us examine therefore our Ideas of the Universe, by the Inference here drawn from

from it, and see if there are not some that will agree and quadrate with it.

And, *First*, Let us begin with the common *Hypothesis*, and the Opinion that we have sucked in as with our Mothers Milk; that there are but two sorts of rational Creatures, *to wit*, Angels and Men, in the Universe; and that therefore, according to this Supposition, the little Creature Man is but a second Remove from Deity itself, the second Best of all the Works of God. Let us also suppose, agreeable to the same *Hypothesis*, that the Moon and Stars are little Balls of Fire, placed a little way up in our *Atmosphere*, and that they are neither much higher nor larger than what they appear to our View. And, lastly, Let us try how this Idea of the Universe will agree with the Words of the *Psalmist*; and whether, upon such a View of Things, he could express himself with any Propriety after the manner he does in the Text; and we shall presently see he could not. For what is there in such a Heaven, or such Stars as these, that is any-way fit to be compared with so important a Creature as Man? Must there not be more real Worth in even one human Soul, than in all the Number of those twinkling Fires, were they Ten thousand times more than they are? It must be owned then, that this Idea of the Universe does at no rate correspond

respond with the Expression here made use of.

Let us go on then, and proceed a Step *further*, and see if that will agree any better. Let us consider the Heavens in a manner more becoming *Philosophers*, and more agreeable to the Rules of *Astronomy*. Let the Moon be swelled from its apparent Size into a prodigious Globe of some Thousands of Miles in Circumference; let the Stars be increased to a yet much larger Bulk; and let their appearing so small not be owing to their Size in themselves, but to that prodigious Distance they are placed at from us. Yet it is not the increasing their Bulk, and their Distances, that will be of any great Service in the Case before us. Make them as large and as high as you please, when weighed in the Balance of impartial Reason, one rational Agent will outweigh them all. Man will be still such a noble and important Being, that, God and Angels excepted, the whole Universe has not his Fellow; and will perhaps think himself slighted, should we suppose even all these vast Bodies too much to be created for his Use and Service, and to adorn and beautify his little Dwelling. But it signifies little what our Pride may imagine, but what is really the Truth of the Case. It is certain, none of these Views of the Universe seem to agree with the *Psalmist's* Expression; nor do they at all help us to see the Force of his Reasoning.

ing. For when we have considered the Universe ever so long in these Views of it, if we ask ourselves after all, *What is Man?* the Answer is still the same; That neither the Moon nor the Stars are so much as once fit to be named in *Competition* with him; and that how much soever they may exceed him in *Bulk*, yet that he as much exceeds them, on the other hand, in *intrinsic Excellence*.

Nor will it avail to object to this Reasoning, That the *Psalmist* is only admiring God's Goodness, in making these Things for Man's Use, and in preparing such a beautiful World for Man's Reception. For the more we suppose these Things as only made for Man, the stronger still is the Argument for his Rank and Dignity, and for his great Importance in the Scale of Being; and the less Reason shall we find to cry out, *When we consider these Things, What is Man? What is wretched and miserable Man, that God should be mindful or careful of him?* The less Reason, I say, shall we see to speak thus of so noble a Creature, as for whose only Service all these Things were made; and who, Angels excepted, has no-where his like to be found.

But there is another *Hypothesis* as yet behind, and which will go near to unriddle this Mystery. Let us therefore venture, for once, to proceed a Step yet *further*; and let us suppose it at least possible, that the Heavenly Bodies may be made for some higher,
and

and more useful Purposes, than just to twinkle at such a Distance upon this our Earth. Let it indeed be gratefully owned, that they are of very great Use, even to us; and as much upon *this*, as they are on the *vulgar Hypothesis*: Yet let us not think it improbable, that they may still be of more to some others. And, as it cannot be denied, but that they are capable of yielding us a great deal more Light than they do; and that they actually would do so, were they nearer to us; let us give that Overplus to some other Beings, which it is not in our Power to enjoy ourselves. Let us not imagine such a *Profusion of Light* to be created for so little Purpose, as only to scatter a few faint Rays on this our Globe, and shew us now-and-then a *Starry Heaven*; but, taking what we can, and what we are able to get, for our own Use, let us think it most likely, that God, who does nothing in vain, has designed the Remainder for some other Creatures, and who may be at least as worthy of his Care as we*. Let the Moon then be supposed to be a World, in some measure, like ours; and let the rest of the Planets be supposed the same, and that the Primary and Secondary serve as Moons, and

* For such vast Room in Nature unpossess'd
By living Soul, desert and desolate;
Only to shine, yet scarce to contribute
Each Orb a Glimpse of Light, convey'd so far
Down to this Habitable, which returns
Light back to them; is obvious to dispute.

MILTON'S *Paradise Lost*, Book VIII.

as Lights to each other; and let the rest of the Stars be converted into so many Suns, that serve to enlighten a Multitude of other Worlds, each filled with their proper Inhabitants; and among which it can be no unreasonable Supposition, that there may be many superior to Man, and that have behaved to their Creator in a much better manner than he has *.

And now, if we try this *Hypothesis*, and apply it to the Words of the Text, we shall find it a Key to open every Lock of it; and that it sets the Reasoning of the *Psalmist* in so strong a Light, as no other Hypothesis whatever can do. We shall have no Reason at all then to wonder, why the Royal *Psalmist* should speak in this manner; for no sooner can we form the Idea of such a *System of Nature* as this, but our Thoughts must run into the self-same Chancel; it must appear before us in so grand a Light, as must even strike us with Admiration at the extensive Fabric, and the glorious Majesty, of the Almighty's Kingdom. And as such innumerable Examples of his infinite Wisdom and Power must fill our Souls with the profoundest Reverence,

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and

* Consult with Reason---Reason will reply;
Each lucid Point, which glows in yonder Sky,
Informs a System in the boundless Space,
And fills with Glory its appointed Place;
With Beams unborrow'd brightens other Skies,
And Worlds, to thee unknown, with Heat and Life
supplies.

See a Poem, called, *The Universe*.

and lay us even in the Dust before him; so must it at the same time equally excite our Gratitude, and inlarge our Ideas of his Grace and Goodness, to think this great, this universal King, this Lord and Sovereign of so many Worlds, before whose Eyes our World is even as *nothing*, and all its Nations even as *less than nothing* (l), should yet have such a tender Regard for all his numerous Subjects, as to be so concerned for the Salvation of unworthy Man, and who has so basely and wickedly rebelled against him. In short, we shall see the most abundant Reason to cry out, as in the Words of the Text, *When we consider thy Heavens, the Work of thy Fingers; the Moon and the Stars, which thou hast created; What is Man, that thou art mindful of him? And the Son of Man, that thou visitest him?* And, to make use of the Words of the Psalmist in another Passage, *All thy Works shall praise thee, O Lord, and thy Saints shall bless thee. They shall speak of the Glory of thy Kingdom, and talk of thy Power* (m).

It would, perhaps, be asserting too much, to say, that this was certainly the Psalmist's Meaning, or that he must certainly have some such-like System of Nature as this in his Eye: And yet, at it appears from other Places, that the Psalmist was no mean Philosopher, but rather a careful Observer of the Works of Nature;

(l) *Isaiah* xl. 15, 16, 17. (m) *Psalms* cxlv. 10, 11.

Nature ; and as a *Plurality of Worlds* is not only a very *antient Hypothesis*, but such as is very apt to present itself to a thinking Mind, on such a Survey of the Heavens as the *Psalmist* speaks of * ; it must therefore appear the most likely of any, to be the very thing which the Text here refers to ; and the more accurately we examine and weigh the Force of every Word of it, the more Reason shall we find to believe, that this is really the genuine Sense of it ; and especially, if we go on to consider, that whereas, upon any other *Hypothesis*, the *Psalmist's* Reasoning is dark and obscure ; this, on the other hand, is no sooner admitted, than the Obscurity presently vanishes, and we are so far from wondering at his way of Thinking, that we are even forced to think in the same manner with him ; his Inference from the Heavens appears just and proper, and all his Reasoning manly, strong, and nervous. However, let this Opinion be received or rejected, and let every Man take his own way. The same Arguments which appear conclusive to some, will not always appear so to all ; nor is Religion any further concerned in it, than as it serves to illustrate some Parts of it—to increase our Reverence

G g 2

for

* ————— For who can see
Such Pomp of Matter, and imagine *Mind*
For which *alone* Inanimate was made,
More sparingly dispens'd ? That nobler Son,
Far liker the great SIRE ! —————

See *Night-Thoughts*.

for the great Creator—to give us clearer Ideas of our Employment in our future Stations—and of the absolute Necessity of moral Goodness, in order to fit and to prepare us for them *—and, at the same time, an humbler Opinion of our little selves, than what will well consist with the ambitious Thought, that God has scarce our Equals among all his Works. Not to insist therefore any longer on the present Topic, let us now go on, with the *Psalmist*, to admire God's Goodness in those surprising Instances of Grace and Favour, which he has been pleased to shew to this unworthy Creature.

And here, to begin with that which is indeed the Foundation of all: With what a surprising Lustre does the Love of God shine forth to us, in sending his Son from Heaven for our Redemption, and in those amazing Indulgencies he has surrounded us with through him? Who, sooner than such Apostates should be lost and perish, for want of those Indulgencies, which their Condition as Sinners, and as Rebels to God, had made necessary, was himself so gracious as to find a *Ransom*, and to provide a proper *Propitiation* for us: Who *so loved the World*, even this wretched, sinful, and degenerate World, *as to give his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him, should not perish, but have everlasting*

* See this further illustrated towards the End of Sermon. XV.

lasting Life (n). Well, sure, might the *Psalmist* cry out, when he considered these things, *What is Man!*—*What is Man, that thou art mindful of him?* And the Son of Man, that thou visitest him, in such a surprisingly merciful and gracious Manner?

But we shall have yet more exalted Ideas of this Love of God through *Christ*, if we go on to consider with the *Psalmist*, that he has through him crowned us with such *Glory and Honour*, as renders us but little inferior to those glorious Beings, who have their Seat in the Top of our *Atmosphere*, the angelical Ministers of this our *Orb*: That though we had sunk ourselves so low by our Apostasy, as to be put for a time under their Rule and Dominion; yet he has now so far honoured us in *Christ* his Son, that the human Nature may, in some respects, be even represented as exalted above them: That we are now no longer to be considered as in a State of Subjection to Angels, but as being both under one common Head, and being all equally subject to the Man *Christ Jesus*: That they are no longer our Rulers, but only *ministring Spirits* under *Christ* our Lord, *sent forth to minister for them who shall be Heirs of Salvation* (o): And that the Time shall come, when, notwithstanding our shameful Apostasy, we shall be even as Angels ourselves, and both they and we be united in one common Body, in

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(n) *John* iii. 16.(o) *Heb.* i. ult.

one blessed and glorious Society, according to his good Pleasure, which he has purposed in himself, that, in the Dispensation of the Fullness of Times, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in Heaven, and which are on Earth, even in him (p).

But, to go on: *Thou madest him*, says the Psalmist, *to have Dominion over the Works of thy Hands. Thou hast put all things under his Feet, all Sheep and Oxen, yea, and the Beasts of the Field, the Fowl of the Air, and the Fish of the Sea, and whatsoever passeth through the Paths of the Seas.* One would be apt to imagine, at first Sight, as was before observed, that the Psalmist here only referred to that Dominion which was given to *Adam* over the Works of the inferior Creation; but that it appears, from the *Apostle's* Quotation of it, that what is here said, has regard to Futurity, and belongs to the *World* (*ἡ οὐκ ἐκκεκρυμένη καὶ μέλλουσα*), the habitable *World to come*; or that *new Heaven and Earth* of which *St. Peter* speaks, and which *we look for*, says he, according to promise, wherein dwelleth Righteousness (q). Nor is it any Objection at all against this, that the Psalmist here speaks of it as something past: For there is nothing more common with the Prophets, than to represent Things future as already done, or to represent God as having fully performed what he has only given us Assurance he will do; thereby

(p) Eph. i. 9, 10.

(q) 2 Pet. iii. 13.

thereby to intimate their certain Futurity, and that we may be as sure of the Truth of them, as if done already.

But now we see not yet, as the Apostle says, *all Things put under him*. We see not this Prophecy as yet fulfilled. Man at first, it is acknowledged, had these things put under him; but, upon his rebelling against God, the inferior Creatures rebelled against him, and not a few of the Beasts of the Field have ever since been at Enmity with him. He that at first was appointed their Lord, is now very often their Prey, nor will they pay the least Homage or Subjection to him. He has indeed resumed his Dignity in *Christ* his Head, and received it again with considerable Advantage; but it is too plain to require any Proof, that he has not received it as yet in his own proper Person. But, because he has not received it as yet, are we therefore to think he never will? God has said it, and therefore will do it, that he also shall resume his Dominion, and regain the Lordship which he had at first. There is a Kingdom prepared for all that faithfully follow the *Lamb*; and, *to him that overcomes*, shall it be granted *to sit on his Throne, even as he also overcame, and is set down with his Father on his Throne* (r). Yea, the Time approaches, and will surely come, when, according to Scripture Prediction, *the Righteous shall inherit the Land*,

(r) Rev. iii. 21.

Land (s), and Power shall be given them to rule the Nations (t); and when, as we are assured by the Prophet *Isaiah*, our Lord shall judge the Poor with Righteousness, and reprove with Equity for the Meek of the Earth: And he shall smite the Earth with the Rod of his Mouth, and with the Breath of his Lips shall he slay the Wicked. And Righteousness shall be the Girdle of his Loins, and Faithfulness the Girdle of his Reins. The Wolf also shall dwell with the Lamb, and the Leopard shall lie down with the Kid; and the Calf, and the young Lion, and the Fatling together; and a little Child shall lead them. And the Cow and the Bear shall feed, their Young ones shall lie down together: And the Lion shall eat Straw like the Ox. And the sucking Child shall play on the Hole of the Asp, and the weaned Child shall put his Hand on the Cockatrice-den (u). And, as St. John has told us, when The Tabernacle of God shall be with Men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his People; and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all Tears from their Eyes; and there shall be no more Death, neither Sorrow, nor Crying; neither shall there be any more Pain: For all the former Things are passed away (w). What therefore remains, but that we join with the Psalmist in praising our God for this his Good-

(s) *Pf.* xxxvii. 29. (t) *Rev.* ii. 26. (u) *Isa.*
xi. 4—8. (w) *Rev.* xxi. 3, 4.

Goodness towards us, for this his so astonishing Goodness to the Sons of Men; and that we cry out with him, in the Conclusion of this Psalm, with which I shall also conclude this Discourse, *O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy Name in all the Earth!*





S E R M O N XI.

*Of the Creation of Man in God's
Image.*

Gen. i. 26.

*And God said, Let us make Man in our Image,
after our Likeness; and let them have Do-
minion over the Fish of the Sea, and over
the Fowl of the Air, and over the Cattle,
and over all the Earth, and over every
creeping Thing that creepeth upon the Earth.*

THE Contents of this Chapter are suffi-
ciently known to every one, to be a short
and succinct Account of the Creation of Heaven
and Earth. And from hence it is, that the whole
Book is called the Book of *Genesis*, or of the Ge-
neration and Production of Things; that is, as
far as relates to this World or Earth on which
we live, and the Air or Atmosphere which float
around

around it. For, not to concern ourselves now, whether there are any more habitable Worlds than this of ours, or no, it is certain this Chapter is chiefly confined to this ; and that it takes little, or rather no notice of any of those bright Orbs which shine around us, any further, than as we are concerned in them, and partake of some Part of their Light. Nor is there even any particular Account with regard to the Creation of Angels, though Beings superior to us, and such as are frequently mentioned in the *Mosaic History*. We are therefore to consider this Account of the Creation, as chiefly confined to this Earth, and its Reduction into a habitable Globe: And the most easy and obvious manner of understanding it, is to consider the sacred Historian, as describing every Scene in the very self-same Manner, as it would have appeared to a Spectator on its Surface, during the Time of its Six Days Formation, which is here represented as follows ; *viz.* That *the Earth was at first without Form, and void*, a rude mis-shapen Mass, as yet destitute of any Inhabitants, and surrounded and covered with *Darkness*, which dwelt *on the Face of the Deep*, or the Waters which then overflowed it ; and that the *First Day's Work* was the Production of *Light*, or the so far clearing the Air, as that the Light might penetrate through, and difference Day from Night. The *next* produces a Division of the Waters into those above, and those be-

low the Firmament, by causing some to float aloft, and to constitute Clouds in the Air, whilst the rest floated on the Face of the Ground. The *Day after*, the Waters, which as yet were not sufficiently removed for the Face of the Earth to appear, are collected into Receptacles proper for them, and the Earth is divided into Sea and Land; and the Waters being thus removed, the Earth brings forth Grass, and Herbs, and Trees for Fruit. After which, as the *Fourth Day's Work*, the Air, which till then had been so thick and cloudy, that though there was a manifest Difference between Day and Night, the Lights of Heaven had not yet appeared, was so far cleared and rarified, as to afford a quite new Prospect, and the Sun and Moon appeared walking in their Brightness, with all the Stars of Heaven, and were appointed for Signs and Seasons, and for Days and Years. The *Fifth Day's Work* produces Fish and Fowl, which the Waters brought forth abundantly. And, on the *Sixth* and last, the Earth produces the Beasts of the Field, Cattle, and creeping Things: And, at the Close of all, comes on the Creation of *Man*—the Creation of Man in God's Image, and after his Likeness. *And God said, Let us make Man in our Image, after our Likeness, &c.* Where we may observe, in the *First Place*, the Time when God created him; *to wit*, on the very last Day, and the last of all his Works; for which

which the *Jewish Talmud* assigns the following Reasons; namely, *First*, Lest Heretics should say, that Man was helpful to God in his Works. *Secondly*, That if his Mind should at any time be lifted up with Pride, it might be said unto him, Even a Fly was created before thee. And, *Thirdly*, That he might immediately enter upon Obedience to the Precept of keeping the Sabbath. To which, I think, may be added a *Fourth*, and perhaps as good as any; namely, That he might not be brought into an empty World, but into one stocked with every thing for his Entertainment.

But, to go on: Another thing here observable is, the Solemnity with which the Creation of Man is introduced. In the foregoing Productions, we read no more than this, that God said, Let such a thing be, and it was; but we have here a kind of solemn Consultation—*And God said, Let us make Man*. It has been a Question here, to whom God spake these Words, or who was joined in this Production with him, the Words, *Let us make*, seeming to shew a Plurality present, and that more than one was concerned in the Case. Some have given it as a Solution of this, that God speaks here after the manner of Kings, with whom nothing is more common than to speak in the plural Number. Others represent him as speaking to the Angels; and some, as addressing himself to the Elements, of which the Body of Man is composed. But the best
Solution

Solution of all is, what is given by the Scriptures themselves, which inform us in so many Words, that *God created all Things by Jesus Christ (a)*; that he *was in the Beginning with God, and was God*; that *all Things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made (b)*; that *by him were all Things created that are in Heaven, and that are in Earth, visible and invisible, whether they be Thrones, or Dominions, or Principalities, or Powers: All Things were created by him, and for him (c)*; and again, that *by him God made the Worlds (d)*. Nor is this Discovery so confined to the *New Testament*, but that we may find at least some Hints of it in the *Old*, which was not unacquainted with God's *anointed Son (e)*, or with his having a Right to the Title both of *Lord* and *God*, as where we read, *The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my Right-hand (f)*; and again, *O God -- thy God hath anointed thee (g)*.

But I come now to the Consideration of that, which is what I shall chiefly insist on; namely, the Creation of Man in God's Image, and after his Likeness. *And God said, Let us make Man in our Image, after our Likeness*. There have been some, who have imagined from hence, that God has a human Shape; and that the Image of God, in which
Man

(a) *Ephes. iii. 9.* (b) *John i. 1, 2, 3.* (c) *Col. i. 16, 17.* (d) *Heb. i. 2.* (e) *Psalms ii. 2. 7. 12.*
(f) *Psalms cx. 1.* (g) *Psalms xlv. 6, 7.*

Man was created, has respect to the Form of his Body : And, I am afraid, there are not wanting, even in an Age of Light like this, who are wont to conceive of God in some such manner ; and to which those gross Representations of him in Pictures, as in the Form of a grave old Man, have more than a little contributed. It is not indeed to be concealed, that this Doctrine is pretended to be proved by *Scripture*, in which we frequently meet with the *Hands* and *Face* of God, and with his *Eyes*, and *Ears*, and *Mouth*, and such-like bodily Parts ; which are first taken for granted to be meant in a literal Sense; and then alleged as Proofs of the aforesaid Notion : Whereas, if we interpret the Scripture as we should do, according to Reason, and so as to preserve the Harmony of every Part of it, such Expressions as these must of course have a figurative Meaning ; nor can we understand them any otherwise, without many and great Absurdities. *Moses* over and over takes care to admonish the *Israelites*, that, as they saw *no manner of Similitude* in the Day that God spake to them in *Horeb*, though he is at the same time said to have talked with them *Face to Face*, so they should *take heed*, and abstain, with a religious Care, from going about to corrupt themselves with any *Image, the Similitude of any Figure, the Likeness of Male or Female* (b). And to whom, says *Isaiab*, *will ye liken God?*

Or

(b) *Deut.* iv. 12. 15, 16. 23. 25. and v. 4. 8, 9.

Or what Likeness will ye compare unto him (i)? Our blessed Saviour expressly assures us, that *God is a Spirit*; and that *a Spirit hath not Flesh and Bones, as is in Men* (k). St. John tells us, that no Man has seen him (l); and St. Paul styles him, *the King immortal, invisible, whom no Man has seen, nor can see*; and gives it as an Instance of the Grossness of the Heathens Folly, that they *changed the Glory of the incorruptible God into an Image made after the Likeness of corruptible Man* (m). And, indeed, the Folly of this is so gross, that many among the Heathens asserted otherwise, and that we should, before all things, believe the Gods to be incorporeal. But, to return to the Scriptures: They who know any thing at all of those most sacred Writings, cannot but know their Description of God to be that of an infinite, omnipresent Spirit, who is present in every Place at one and the self-same time, who sees in Darkeness, hears the silent Thought, and fills invisibly the Whole of Space; which are Things that will no-way consist with his having a Body like us; and which are sufficient to instruct us, when we read of his Eyes and Ears, that the Scripture intends no more, than that God can see and hear, which are things we perform by those Organs; and not that he has *Eyes of*

Flesh,

(i) *Isaiab xl. 18.* (k) *John iv. 24. and Luke xxiv. 39.* (l) *John i. 18. and 1 John iv. 12.* (m) *1 Tim. i. 17. and vi. 16.*

Flesh, or *sees as Man does* (n). And from hence it appears, that the seeing God *Face to Face*, imports only a Sight of that bright and glorious Light, that divine *Shechinah*, or visible *Glory of God*, which appeared to the Patriarchs, and the antient Prophets, and was always looked upon as a *Symbol* of his special *Presence*; and not the Appearance of any thing in human Form, or that had a Body or Face like a Man. But, not to insist any longer upon this at present, having thus briefly seen wherein this Image does not consist, let us now proceed more particularly to consider wherein it does. And here,

FIRST, It seems plain from our Text, compared with other Places, that one Part of this *Likeness* consisted in his having *Dominion*, and being invested with Authority and Power. And God said, *Let us make Man in our Image, after our Likeness; and let them have Dominion over the Fish of the Sea, and over the Fowl of the Air, and over the Cattle, and over all the Earth, and over every creeping Thing that creepeth upon the Earth.* So God created Man in his own Image; in the Image of God created he him; Male and Female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, *Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the Earth, and subdue it; and have Dominion over the Fish of the Sea, and over the*

I i

Fowl

(n) Job x. 4.

Fowl of the Air, and over every living Thing that moveth upon the Earth. It must be owned, indeed, that these Words, of themselves, will not amount to a positive Proof, that the Image of God consisted in this Dominion; for, *Let us make Man in our Image—and let them have Dominion*—may relate to Two different Things, and may signify, that he was both made in God's Image, and invested with this Power and Dominion too. They may, I say, as to what appears from the Text, have respect to Two different Things. But then, if we consider these Words, as compared with other Scriptures, we shall see Reason to believe, that they so far respect the same, as that the Dominion and Power there spoken of, was at least a Part of the Image or Likeness of God before-mentioned. All those several Passages in *holy Writ*, in which Angels, and Princes, and Magistrates, are represented as so many Gods, are all of them Proofs of it. For why should a Prince or Magistrate be stiled a God any more than another Man, but from his having superior Dominion, and being invested with greater Authority? Is not this the only thing in which they differ from the rest of their Species, and, consequently, the only Foundation for this different Title? And if therefore judicial and governing Power is sufficient to make Men Gods, though in a Sense very different from that, in which we are to understand that

Word

Word when applied to the *One Supreme*; if it is a sufficient Reason for the *Holy Ghost* to give them that high Appellation; if the Scripture calls such Gods, as are thus invested with Power and Dominion; then that Dominion and Power must of course be a sufficient Foundation to represent Man as made in God's Image, which is even sufficient, and has really intitled him, in the Judgment of Scripture itself, to a Right to be called by his Name; though, as before observed, in a far *inferior Sense*. For though Angels and Magistrates are often in Scripture stiled Gods, in which Sense there are *Gods and Lords many*, yet, if we understand the Word *God* in its highest and properest Sense, it in that Sense belongs but to *one*, besides whom there is no other God, and who is therefore stiled, by way of Eminence, the *only true (o)*, the *Lord of Lords (p)*, and *the Lord God of Gods (q)*, to whom all other Beings are subject, and on whom all other Beings depend, *of whom, and through whom, and to whom, are all Things: To whom be Glory for ever. Amen (r)*. Man therefore might truly be said to be made in this Image or Likeness, as he was invested with Authority and Power, even over every thing made here below, and by which he bore some Resemblance to that great and adorable

I i 2

God,

(o) *John* xvii. 3. (p) *1 Tim.* vi. 15. (q) *Joshua* xxii. 22. (r) *Rom.* xi. ult.

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God, whose Vicegerent on Earth he might be
said to be. But, to go on ;

SECONDLY, Man was also made in the Image of God, as he was created in *Wisdom* and *Holiness* ; as he was a moral intelligent Agent, a pure, and innocent, and righteous Being. For that this was likewise a Part of that divine Image in which Man was created, seems plain from the Words of the Apostle ; *Lye not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old Man with his Deeds ; and have put on the new Man, which is renewed in Knowledge, after the Image of him that created him (s)*. And again, *Put off, concerning the former Conversation, the old Man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful Lusts ; and be renewed in the Spirit of your Mind ; and put on the new Man, which, after God (or the Image of God), is created in Righteousness, and true Holiness (t)*. Knowledge, therefore, Righteousness, and Holiness, are a Part of the Image of God, as well as Authority and Power ; and Man resembled him at first in the one, as well as the other ; for *God made Man upright, but they have sought out many Inventions (u)*. And, in this Sense, *Let us make Man in our Image, after our Likeness*, is of the same Import as, *Let us make Man an intelligent rational Agent, capable of knowing the Difference*

(s) *Col. iii. 9, 10.*
(u) *Eccles. vii. ult.*

(t) *Eph. iv. 22, 23, 24.*

ence between Good and Evil ; let him be endowed with a superior Understanding to the Beasts of the Field, and to the Fowl of Heaven, with an Understanding capable of the Knowledge of God, and of the Relation he stands in to him ; a Being qualified for virtuous Actions, and for a rational Worship and Service. But again ;

THIRDLY, Man was likewise made in the Image of God, as he was a Being made and designed for *Immortality*. Inferior Beings, at least as far as we know of the Matter, were made mortal by God at the first. There is not the least Intimation of their being framed with any Design, that they should live for ever, and not see Corruption. They did not, in this respect, therefore, any more than in those which we have already mentioned, carry any Resemblance unto God their Maker, or bear the Image of *the King immortal*. But, as to Man, the Case is just the contrary : *For God created Man to be immortal, and made him to be an Image of his own Eternity* (w) ; so that, with regard to him, it may be justly said, that God made not Death, but that Man himself called it unto him. Had he continued as God made him, he had lived for ever ; and therefore, in this respect also, as well as in Wisdom and Power, was he made in the
Image

(w) *Wisdom* ii. 23.

Image of God, and in the Likeness of him that created him. Let me add,

In the FOURTH Place, That there is a great deal of Reason to think, that Man was made in the Image of God in a still further Degree, as being furrounded with *Light* and *Splendor*, or, as he was originally made with a bright and shining Body, after the Likeness of the holy and divine *Shekinah*, and thereby cloathed, as it were, with Light, as with a Garment. That God is often represented as *Light*, as *cloathed with Light*, and as *dwelling in Light inaccessible*, will by none, I believe, be denied, who know any thing at all of the Scriptures. And, if we examine the Accounts of his appearing on Earth among Men, we shall find them agree with the above Description. For in this manner did he first appear, or by his Angel, however, to *Moses* (x). In the same manner did he descend at the giving the Law on Mount *Sinai* (y). Under the Resemblance of a *Pillar of a Cloud, and Fire*, did he constantly lead the *Israelites* through the Wilderness (z). And, when the Tabernacle was finished, the History expressly informs us, that a *Cloud covered the Tent of the Congregation, and the Glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle* (a).—*The Glory of the Lord*; that is, that bright and

(x) *Exod.* iii. 2, 3, 4. (y) *Exod.* xix. 18. (z) *Exod.* xiii. ult. and *Numb.* ix. 15. (a) *Exod.* xl. 34.

and glorious Light, which was always reckoned as a Sign of his Presence (b). So, at the Dedication of Solomon's Temple, we read, that, *when Solomon had made an End of praying, the Fire came down from Heaven, and consumed the Burnt-offering, and the Sacrifices; and the Glory of the Lord filled the House. And the Priests could not enter into the House of the Lord, because the Glory of the Lord had filled the Lord's House* (c). But to what Purpose, may it be said, are all these, or a Multitude more of such Instances? It is very well known, that God is said to be cloathed with Light, and that he has often appeared in that Manner; but how does this prove, that Man was cloathed so too? If it proves, that God appeared in that Form; and that to be cloathed and invested with Light, is therefore a Part of the Image or Form of God; it proves all that at present is intended from it. For then Man's being made in God's Image, and after his Likeness, will at least give us some Ground to believe, that he also was made in this manner; and that he, as well as the Angels, to whom he was but a little inferior, resembled his Maker in this, as well as in other Endowments. And this Proof will be greatly increased, if we go on to consider,

In the *First* Place, That the Scripture assures us this shall be the Case, when that Image of God,

(b) See *Whitby's Annot. on Rom. i. 23.* (c) *2 Chron. vii. 1, 2.*

God, which was lost by the Fall, is restored. For so the *Apostle of the Gentiles* informs us in his Discourse of the Resurrection of the Just. *It is sown*, says he, speaking of the Body, *in Corruption ; it is raised in Incorruption : It is sown in Dishonour ; it is raised in Glory (d)*. And, in his *Epistle to the Church at Philippi, Our Conversation*, says he, *is in Heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ ; who shall change our vile Body (the Body of our Humiliation, as the original Words there signify, and which seem plainly to refer to the Loss of this primitive Glory), that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious Body ; that is, may be cloathed with Light and Glory like his own, according to the Working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself (e)*. Accordingly he tells the *Corinthians*, that *in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be cloathed upon with our House (or Covering) which is from Heaven ; if so be that, being cloathed (with this Glory), we shall not be found naked (f)*, as will then be the Case of the Wicked, to whom this glorious Covering will not be vouchsafed. And, to the same Purpose, the Angel tells the Prophet *Daniel*, that *they that be wise shall shine as the Brightness of the Firmament, and they that turn many to Righteousness, as the Stars for ever and ever (g)*. And,

(d) 1 Cor. xv. 42, 43.

(e) Philip. iii. ult.

(f) 2 Cor. v. 2, 3.

(g) Dan. xii. 3.

And, to add no more, our blessed Lord himself has assured us in so many Words, that *the Righteous shall shine forth as the Sun in the Kingdom of their Father. Who hath Ears to hear, let him hear* (b). It is therefore no-way unlikely, but rather highly probable, that something like this was the Case as to Man at the first; and that his Condition in Paradise, before his Fall, was in this, as in other respects, something like what it will be at his Restoration. But, to go on;

Secondly, It may be a further Confirmation of this, that the Nature of Man is evidently such, as to be capable of this Glory, even in its present State. For thus *Moses* was glorified by conversing with God in the Mount, his Face shining to such a Degree, that the *Israelites* durst not come nigh him, nor could they converse with him for some time, but when he covered his Face with a Veil (i). After the same manner was our Saviour *transfigured* before Three of his *Apostles* in the holy Mount, so that *his Face did shine as the Sun, and his Raiment was white as the Light* (k). And it is further recorded of *Stephen* the Protomartyr, that *all that sat in the Council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his Face as the Face of an Angel* (l). And if the human Nature is thus plainly capable of this, even in

K k

this

(b) *Matt.* xiii. 43.(i) *Exod.* xxxiv. 29, &c.(k) *Matt.* xvii. 1, 2, 3.(l) *Acts* vi. ult. See also*Whitby* in locum.

this State of Mortality and Corruptibility, how much more may we suppose it to have been so in its State of Innocence and Immortality, and when it first came perfect from its Maker's Hands! How much more, I say, may we imagine it to have been so, when it was altogether pure and undefiled, when God could see his *Image*, and take Pleasure in it; behold his Work, and find it *very good* (m), bright, and unfulled by the Filth of Sin! When he could truly say, Behold the Man *my Son*, whom I have made in my *Image*, and after my *Likeness*! For *Adam* also was *the Son of God*, and is therefore justly represented as *the Figure of him that was to come* (n).

Let me add, *Thirdly*, That such a Glory as this we are speaking of, seems no more than the natural Effect of Converse with God, and other glorious Beings, which, no doubt, was Man's Case at the first. The before-mentioned Glory of *Moses*, contracted unknown to himself, by so long conversing with God Face to Face, and which, perhaps, was absolutely necessary to enable him so to do, may serve as an Illustration and a Proof of this; which will be yet further confirmed, by considering the Words of *the beloved Disciple*; *Beloved, now are we the Sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: But we know, that, when he shall appear, we shall be like*

(m) Gen. i. ult.
v. 14.

(n) Luke iii. ult. and Rom.

like him ; FOR WE SHALL SEE HIM AS HE IS
(*o*). But, to go on ;

Fourthly, There was certainly some Difference between Humankind before the Fall, when they were not ashamed, and needed no Cloaths or Apparel, and the same Creatures after the Fall, when they found themselves shamefully naked ; and when God himself saw it fit to make Coats of Skins, and cloathe them. Now, if we suppose them cloathed before with Light and Glory, and that this Glory immediately forsook them on their eating the Fruit of the forbidden Tree, we shall have no Reason to wonder they should so readily find themselves naked, or dread the Sight of God on that Account, whose Image and Favour they could not but know they had lost by the Change, the too visible Change, which they could not but see in themselves. They were naked before, as to any artificial Apparel ; but, while this Glory continued, they were not ashamed of *that Nakedness*, nor did they stand in Need of any other Cloathing : But, when this was gone, it immediately opened their Eyes, to see the Fruits and Effects of their Sin, and they found themselves *naked indeed*. And therefore it is very observable, that the Word made use of to signify their Nakedness after the Fall, has a Letter more in it than that which is used for their being naked before, to shew, that they now were naked in a dif-

K k 2

ferent

(*o*) 1 John iii. 2.

ferent Manner, and in a different Degree, than what they were at first (*p*). There are other Solutions, I know, that are given of this; but there are none, I think, that solve the Case so well, or set the Matter in so good a Light. Let me add,

In the *Fifth* Place, That this likewise accounts for that Dominion which was given Man over the Creatures, and for that natural Dread of Fire which is still so visibly in them. That Man was made at first to have Dominion over these, the Words of the Text are an abundant Proof; but which way should he maintain this Dominion, or be able to keep and support it? Was he superior in Strength to all the other Creatures? Or was he better provided than they with any kind of natural Armour, that could serve him either for Offence or Defence? So far from it, that Man has no natural Armour at all, that will so much as set him on a Level with many other Creatures, much less set him above them as a Lord and King; and, as to those artificial Arms that have been found out since, they had none of them any Place in the State of Innocence. And can we think, that Man, the most perfect of all God's Creatures here below, was originally made thus naked, thus defenceless? That he who was made for Dominion over all the rest, should have nothing whereby

(*p*) See *Peel's Synopsis* on Gen. iii. 7. and *Leigb's Critica Sacra* on the Word עֶרְוָה.

whereby to maintain it? Suppose him then cloathed in the manner above represented, and the Myſtery is all at an End; and he was not only cloathed more gloriously than the other Creatures, he did not only appear as a more godlike, more majestic Form, but, being thus crowned with Glory and Honour, he was likewise ſufficiently armed to preſerve and maintain his Dominion, and to be ſet, as he actually was, at the Head of the Works of God's Hands. This we ſee even now at this Day, there being nothing ſo good a Preſervative againſt the Attacks of wild Beaſts, as the being armed with Light and Fire; ſo that it is but ſuppoſing him originally cloathed with this, and he might walk with Safety among Bears and Tygers, and the fierceſt Beaſts would flee, or crouch before him; the ſhining Form would need no other Armour, thus cloathed at once with Glory and Defence. And it is but ſuppoſing him ſtripped of this upon his Fall, and it is as eaſily accounted for, why they are not afraid of him now. For as this gave him Dominion, ſo the Loſs of this took it away from him. And, in this manner, did he afterwards beget his Sons, not in the *Image of God*, but *his own* (a); poor indigent Creatures, with Bodies of Humiliation, and without any Remains of the antient and primitive Glory. But it is time now to proceed to a Cloſe. And,

Fiſt,

(a) *Gen. v. 3.*

First, Hence may we see, how little Reason we have to be proud of our present Apparel, or to value ourselves upon that which is only a Sign we are Sinners. Should a Servant be proud of his Badge? Or a Slave make his Boast of his Chains? Or should that which in Reason ought to teach us Humility, and to remind us from whence we are fallen, be made use of to nourish and support our Vanity? Is it so fine a thing to wear the Sinner's Livery? Is there any Reason to be so excessively pleased with it? Why then so proud of a little gay Cloathing, or of a more splendid Proof, that we are fallen from God? Can that which shews our *Vanity*, prove our *Merit*? Or should that which shews our *Guilt*, support our *Pride*? But,

Secondly, Hence also may we see, how much Reason we have to hate Sin; which has robbed and despoiled us of our pristine Glory, and exposed us to so many Evils. Had it not been for this, we had still been glorious Beings, and such as should have lived for ever, and not seen Corruption; the whole World had been a Paradise of Joy and Pleasure, and Wars and Tumults had been Things unknown; Sicknefs and Pain had never found Admittance, or Grief or Sorrow seized the human Breast. O Sin! What hast thou done! How hast thou spoiled the Face of God's Creation, and spread Destruction among all our Race! How hast thou pulled the Crown

from

from off our Heads, and brought us down with Sorrow to the Dust ! Robbed us of that which was our truest Glory, our Maker's Image, and our Maker's Likeness, and plunged us deep in an Abyss of Woes ! And, to shut up all,

In the *Third* and *Last* Place, Hence may we learn, what great Reason we have to be thankful to God for the unspeakable Gift of his Son ; who came on Purpose to recover us from our sad Apostasy, and to restore us to this *Image* again, by bringing us back into the Paths of Virtue, raising us up from Death to Life and Immortality ; and, in a word, changing these Bodies of our Humiliation into the Form and Fashion of his glorious Body, and making us happy and blessed unto all Eternity. This, through the Grace of our good God, and our most loving Saviour, is now our blessed and happy Condition. We may all be thus blessed, by the Assistance of God, if we will ; and, if we are not, the Fault is our own. A Saviour is provided, a Ransom is found out, a Salve for every Sore, a Balm for every Wound, a Supply for every Want.

Let us then call upon our Souls, and all that is within us, to praise and magnify the Lord our God for all the Goodness he has shewn unto us ; and join our Voice with the Celestial Choir, in saying, *Worthy is the Lamb*
that

256 *Of the Creation of Man, &c. Sermon XI.*
that was slain, to receive Power, and Riches,
and Wisdom, and Strength, and Honour, and
Glory, and Blessing.

Blessing, and Honour, and Glory, and
Power, be unto him that sitteth upon the
Throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and
ever (r).

(r) *Rev. v. 12, 13.*



S E R.



S E R M O N XII.

*Of the Incarnation and Sufferings
of Christ.*

Heb. ii. 17, 18.

Wherefore in all Things it behoved him to be made like unto his Brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High-Priest, in Things pertaining to God, to make Reconciliation for the Sins of the People : For, in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

THERE is something so surprisngly wonderful in the Incarnation and Sufferings of the Son of God for the Sins and Transgressions of the Sons of Men, that it is not at all to be wondered at, that even the Angels are represented as *desiring to look into*

L 1

these

258 *Of the Incarnation and* Serm. XII.
these Things (a). For is it not an astonishing
Consideration, that a Person of so great Glory,
and of such high Rank and Dignity in the
Scale of Being, should descend from Heaven
to save such Worms as we? That he should
not only quit his lofty and exalted Station,
and exchange it for a Dwelling upon this our
Earth; but that he should also consent to be
a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with Grief?
And that *the Chastisement of our Peace* should
be upon him, that we by *his Stripes* might be
healed (b)? That he who was *in the Form of*
God, should not only take upon him *the Form*
of a Servant, and be *made in the Likeness of*
Men; but that, *being found in Fashion as a*
Man, he should also further *humble himself*
upon our Account, even so far as to *become*
obedient unto Death, even the painful Death
of the Cross (c)? And yet this was fitting and
proper; for so the Counsels of God had de-
termined, that the great Work of our Sal-
vation might be brought about. It was not a
mere arbitrary Appointment, that the Lord
Jesus should suffer such things, but the Result
of the most perfect and unerring Wisdom.
For it became him, says our Apostle in the
10th Verse, *for whom are all Things, and by*
whom are all Things, in bringing many Sons
unto Glory, to make the Captain of their Sal-
vation perfect through Sufferings. And again,
Verse

(a) 1 Pet. i. 12. (b) Isaiah liii. 3, 4, 5. (c) Phil.
ii. 6, 7, 8.

Verse the 14th, *Forasmuch then as the Children are Partakers of Flesh and Blood, he also himself likewise, that is, Christ, took Part of the same; that, through Death, he might destroy him that had the Power of Death, that is, the Devil.* And again, in the Words of our Text, *Wherefore in all Things it behoved him to be made like unto his Brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High-Priest, in things pertaining to God, to make Reconciliation for the Sins of the People: For, in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted:* Where we have Two Ends of our Lord's Incarnation (to omit others not here taken notice of) highly worthy our serious Regard; namely, *First*, That he might faithfully discharge his Office as God's *High-Priest*, to make *Reconciliation for the Sins of the People.* And, *Secondly*, That, having *suffered*, being tempted himself, he might be the more *able and willing* to succour his *suffering Brethren.* And accordingly, in the further Prosecution of this Subject, and that I may set before you at once those *noble Views* the Apostle here had plainly in his Eye, I shall,

FIRST, Consider the Expediency of our Lord's Incarnation *to make Reconciliation for the Sins of the People.*

SECONDLY, Its yet further Expediency, in order to make him a more *merciful High-Priest*,

260 *Of the Incarnation and* Serm. XII.
Priest, and a more tender and compassionate
Judge. And then,

THIRDLY, and lastly, Shut up all with
some useful Reflections.

And, FIRST, Let us consider the Expediency of our Lord's Incarnation, or how it for this Cause behoved him *to be in all Things made like to his Brethren*, that he might make *Reconciliation for the Sins of the People*. And, to this Purpose, let us first consider the Expediency, that there should be a *Propitiation*; and then, of our Lord's Incarnation and Sufferings for that *View and End*. And here, as to the Expediency of a *Propitiation*, or some valuable *Atonement* for Sin; though God's appointing and choosing this Method might be enough to convince us, that it is highly fit, and reasonable, and proper, even though we ourselves could assign no Reason for it; yet, as it is more desirable to see the Wisdom of the Divine Proceedings, and to discern the Expediency of the Ways of Providence, than to remain intirely in the Dark about them, let us therefore bring this Matter on the Stage before us; and let us examine it with that serious Attention, which the Nature and Importance of the thing requires.

When the World first proceeded from the Hands of God, we are informed expressly, by the sacred History, that *God saw every thing that he had made; and, behold, it was very good.*

god (*d*). But *Man*, the most favoured and exalted Being, the Lord and Sovereign of this lower World, and who was made to be an *Image of God's own Eternity* (*e*), soon turned his Back upon his good Creator, and ungratefully threw his Yoke from off his Shoulders. And, as the Law which was given him, was guarded with *Death* as its Sanction, the Sentence passed accordingly on the human Race, who had now no longer any Title to that *Immortality*, which their Obedience to their Creator would have blessed them with. God made them *upright*; but they fought out many *Inventions*, and went on rebellious to add Sin to Sin; so that their Wickedness was great on the Earth, and the Earth was filled with Violence. Thus was the World corrupted by a Flood of Sin; the *Tree of Life* was no longer *approachable*; and the awful Sentence was gone forth from Heaven, *that Man should return to his primitive Dust*. But the *Father of Mercies* would not leave us thus: His Bowels yearned towards his apostate Offspring; he looked with Pity on his fallen *Sons*, no longer *worthy* to sustain that Name; yet looked with Eyes of *fatherly Compassion*; and, notwithstanding our Unworthiness of such Thoughts of Favour, was still desirous that we might be *happy*; and that we might not only be delivered from that State of *Misery* and *Death*, which by our Sins we had brought

(*d*) *Gen. i. ult.*(*e*) *Wisdom ii. 23.*

brought ourselves into, but might be also raised to *Happiness*, and *Life eternal*. It was therefore, in short, *resolved*, That Man should be *restored*; that he should be still recovered, even in Spite of *Death*; that he should be placed again within the *Pales of Favour*, and on a *better Footing* than that from which he fell. Such was the Will and the Decree of Heaven, and such the Grace of our offended Father, whose Ways are not as human Ways, nor his Thoughts like human Thoughts. But then *infinite Wisdom* must do all things *wisely*; and, if *Mercy* prompts, on the one hand, to *forgive* Transgression, *Wisdom* and *Holiness*, on the other hand, as strongly forbid to *encourage* it; and will therefore by no means permit, that a Pardon shall rashly be published, without some such valuable Consideration being first proposed, as shall render it consistent with the *Rules of Wisdom*, and with the *Reason* and *Fitness* of *Things* (f).

Had there been only a single *Offence*, or had there been only a single *Offender*, the Repentance of the Person offending had perhaps been *Atonement* sufficient; though it does not seem fit it should *always* be so, even in that Case: For though Repentance is, and must always be, a necessary Qualification for Pardon; yet that it is so sufficient of itself to procure it, as to render it proper for a wise and good Being to pass by every Transgression, merely

(f.) *Rom.* iii. 25, 26. and *Ephes.* i. 7, 8.

merely on that Condition, is not only a Maxim too dangerous to be admitted in human Governments, but would, I fear, be too destructive to be admitted in any whatever, as it may be in the Power of a single Offender to do such irreparable Mischief, even to a Number of God's other Creatures, as no after Repentance whatever can make an Amends for ; to say nothing, how much such Maxims in Government, by their Tendency to encourage Offenders, must also tend to multiply and increase their Number. It can therefore, I think, be no unreasonable, but rather a wise, and even a necessary Appointment, that the Gates of Mercy should not be so far open, as that Repentance alone should be always sufficient for Pardon ; but that either the Offender be punished, his Penitence notwithstanding, as the Legislator himself shall see fit, or something further at least be insisted on as an Atonement, besides his Repentance ; and this not of his own, but of the Legislator's appointing ; that so the Rights of Government may be always thereby secured, a sufficient Check be given to Disobedience, and the Throne of Grace have always a proper Guard, set, as it ought, by the omniscient Mind, who certainly knows both when and how to exercise his Favours, in a much better manner than we can presume to teach him. And if such Appointments may be necessary, even with regard to a single Offender, their

Necessity.

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Neceſſity, undoubtedly, muſt be vaſtly greater, where Mercy is to be ſhewn to a *World of Offenders*, and thoſe guilty of *many as well as great Offences*; and eſpecially where the Caſe is ſuch, as is plainly the Caſe *with us*, that it is not enough remit by *paſt Offences*, but there is alſo need of Allowances for the *Time to come*. In ſuch Caſes as theſe, to receive to Mercy *ſo many Offenders*, and each guilty of *ſo many as well as great Offences*, as is the Caſe of the Generality of the human Race, upon their bare Repentance and Amendment at any time, without inſiſting on any thing further, ſeems plainly to ſhew too little Regard to the Honour of Laws and Government, and to give too much Encouragement to offend again. And what therefore more proper Expedient, in a Caſe like this, than that the Grace thus ſhewn ſhould be founded on a *Propitiation*, or on ſome ſuch *ſignal and remarkable Sacrifice*, ſome ſuch *valuable Offering for Sin*, as may proclaim and teſtify to all the World, where-ever the Tidings of this Grace ſhall come, that the Lord our God is *holy*, as well as *merciful*; and that, notwithſtanding his Regard to his *Creatures*, he has yet ſuch a Regard for the Honour of his *Laws and Government*, as will not ſuffer him to *behold Iniquity*; that at the ſame time that we find ourſelves in the Arms of *Grace*, we may yet ſee that *Sin* is far from a trifling Matter; and the very *Manner of our being forgiven*
may

may deter us from sinning afresh ; may lead us to serve him with Fear, and to rejoice before him with Trembling ; and, at the same time that we *rejoice* in his *Mercy*, yet to stand in *Awe*, and to be afraid, of his *Judgments* ? But this, as is well observed by a judicious Author, ‘ was only a single Transaction, ‘ Christ died, and rose again, to die no more : ‘ But now, every Sinner being required to ‘ *come by him* unto God, to look to this Blood ‘ of sprinkling, to apply to Christ as an Advocate, and to depend upon him as the Propitiation when he comes to make his Peace ‘ with God, and, in short, to have all his Accusations to him by this great *Higb-Priest* ; here ‘ is the most effectual way to keep alive in the ‘ Soul a Sense of God’s Abhorrence of Sin, ‘ while he tastes and sees how gracious the ‘ Lord is in passing it by *.’ And, if it is once seen, that a *Propitiation for Sin* is in itself highly *fit* and *becoming*, and that our Case was such in particular as especially seemed to want it ; if it appears to be a proper and *well-chosen Foundation* for all the amazing Grace which God has shewn us, and that it would not have been so proper to have shewn us such Favour *without one* ; if this is any-way evident, as I would hope at least in some measure it is, it can be no difficult Matter to shew the Fitness of *that Propitiation*, which our heavenly Father has chosen and provided.

M m

For

* Mr. Tomkins’s *Mediator and Advocate*, p. 144.

For if a Propitiation is any-way necessary to shew us the Evil of Sin, at the same time that it publishes and proclaims its Pardon, then the more noble the Propitiation, by Consequence so much the better. A trifling Propitiation in this Case, such as *the Blood of Bulls and Goats*, or the Death of *one Man* for the Sins of *Millions*, must appear at first Sight to be an Atonement much too mean, and such as would be hardly preferable to none at all. It must be therefore very fitting and proper, that the Person, who makes the *Atonement*, should not only be something, but *highly superior to Man*; that so the Dignity of his Person may make his Sufferings the more meritorious, and the Righteousness of God shine forth the more apparent. And just such is that Atonement, which God in his Grace has provided. For it was not only a Man like ourselves that died and suffered for us, though he then appeared to us in the same Resemblance, but the *Son and Image of the invisible God, the first-born of every Creature (g), whom he hath appointed Heir of all Things, by whom also he made the Worlds (h)*. Such, and so glorious, was the great Redeemer, that came from Heaven to Earth for Man's Salvation. But then, that such a Being may suffer, and make an Atonement for Sin, it is further necessary for him, that he take our Nature, and that he make this Atonement in the Form of Man, that as

human

(g) *Coloss. i. 15.*(h) *Heb. i. 2.*

human Nature had sinned, so human Nature might make the Atonement, and the Law might be honoured in the very same Nature, though by a Person of far higher Rank, in which it was originally broke and despised. For *the first Man*, Adam, was *of the Earth*, and *earthly*: But *the Second Adam* was the *Lord from Heaven* (i); and who, by taking a Body like ours, became thereby a *fit Mediator*, a proper *Medium* between God and Man, every-way fitly qualified to discharge his Office, to *atone* for Sin, and to *abolish* Death, and *bruise*, as was foretold, the *Serpent's Head* (k). And thus you see how, for this Cause, in the *First Place*, it was highly proper for our Redeemer and Saviour *to be in all things made like to his Brethren*; or how it behoved him to be assimilated to the Sons of Men, that he might *make Reconciliation for the Sins of the People*. Come we now therefore, as was proposed,

In the *SECOND Place*, To consider the yet further Expediency of our Lord's Incarnation and Sufferings, in order to render him a more *merciful High-Priest*, and a more *tender and compassionate Judge*; or how it behoved him, for this Purpose also, to be in all things made like to his Brethren, that, having *suffered*, being *tempted* himself, he might be the more *able and inclinable* to succour others: Which is

M m 2

(i) 1 Cor. xv. 47.

(k) Gen. iii. 15.

an *End* of the Sufferings of *Christ*, that has not been so commonly observed, as it were to be wished, both for the Glory of God, and the Edification of Man, that it had been; in that, in this Proceeding also of the Almighty's *Providence*, we have such an astonishing View of the divine infinite Wisdom and Goodness, as cannot fail, if we rightly consider it, to fill our Hearts with Wonder, and our Mouths with Praise. As a Propitiation was necessary, God was pleased in his Goodness to find one; and we have accordingly seen his *Messiah*, or the Person *anointed* for that End and Purpose, descending from Heaven, laying aside *the Form of God*, and taking on him *the Form of a Servant*: We have seen him dwelling among us in a Body of Flesh like our own, a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with Grief, struggling with Hardships, encountring Reproach and Shame, enduring *the Contradiction of Sinners against himself*, and at last submitting to a painful and a shameful Death for us, that thereby he might bring us to God. But is this all we are to see of this great and glorious Person? Must we leave him at last in the *Grave*? Must that be the final Period of all his Sufferings? Of all his Love to God, and Love to Men? Must we close the Scene with Grief and Lamentation, that *Jesus*, the Friend of Souls, is now no more? Has his Father intirely forsaken him? Has he deserted the Son

of his Love, with whom he was always well pleased, and who came down from Heaven on purpose to do his Will? Even to *give himself for our Sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil World, according to the Will of God, and our Father: To whom be Glory for ever and ever (l).* The Christians God is no such Kind of Being as to treat his Son in any such way and manner; nor is he one that says to any of his Servants, Seek ye my Face, or obey my Voice, in vain. Though wicked Men unjustly abuse their Saviour, and treat his Love to them with Contempt and Scorn; yet the righteous Lord is one that loveth Righteousness, and will not suffer it to go unrewarded: And, if he sees fit to appoint his Son to suffer Grief, yet he will not appoint it without such proper and glorious Encouragements, as are worthy his Son to accept, and worthy himself to bestow. This the *Scripture* has told us with sufficient Plainness; nor has it left us at all at a Loss, to know what these Encouragements were. The Psalmist *David* had expressly foretold of him, that God would not *leave his Soul in Hades*, nor suffer his Holy one *to see Corruption*; but that he would *shew him the Path of Life*, and set him at his own *Right-hand*, where are *Pleasures for evermore (m)*; and further, that he would *set his King on his holy Hill of Sion*; and

(l) *Gal.* i. 4, 5.
Acts ii. 25, &c.

(m) *Pf.* xvi. *u.* compared with

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 and that he would give him the Heathen for
 his Inheritance, and the uttermost Parts of the
 Earth for his Possession (n). The Prophet
Isaiab had likewise foretold of him, that the
 Government should be on his Shoulder, and that
 he should see of the Travel of his Soul, and
 should be satisfied (o). And the Prophet *Da-*
niel had seen him in his Visions, receiving Do-
 minion, and Glory, and a Kingdom, even an
 everlasting Dominion, which shall not pass
 away, and a Kingdom, which shall not be de-
 stroyed (p). And, Let us run, says our Apo-
 stle, with Patience, the Race that is set before
 us, looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher
 of our Faith; who, for the Joy that was set
 before him, endured the Cross, despising the
 Shame, and is now set down at the Right-hand
 of the Throne of God (q). And again, Let
 this Mind, says the Apostle, be in you, which
 was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the
 Form of God, was not covetous, as it should be
 rendered, to appear as God; but made himself
 of no Reputation, and took upon him the Form
 of a Servant, and was made in the Likeness
 of Men: And, being found in Fashion as a
 Man, he humbled himself, and became obedient
 unto Death, even the Death of the Cross.
 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him,
 and given him a Name which is above every
 Name; That, at the Name of Jesus, every
 Knee

(n) *Pf.* ii. 6. 8.

(p) *Dan.* vii. 13, 14.

(o) *Isaiab* ix. 6. and liii. 11.

(q) *Heb.* xii. 1, 2.

Knee should bow, of Things in Heaven, and Things on Earth, and Things under the Earth; and that every Tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father (r). And, to the same Purpose, our Lord himself tells us, that, *As the Father hath Life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have Life in himself; and hath given him Authority to execute Judgment also, because he is the Son of Man* (s). From which, with many other Places, that, were it needful, might be easily brought, it appears, that the Joy which was set before *Christ*, or the Reward proposed to him for the Work of our Redemption, was, that the World he redeemed, should be given into his Hands; that he should be made our Lord, our Lawgiver, and Judge, and sit as God upon his *Father's Throne* (t). Whence we find him compared by himself in the Gospel to a certain Nobleman going into a far Country to receive for himself a Kingdom, and to return (u); and assuring his Disciples, after his rising again from the Dead, that he had all Power given him, both in Heaven and Earth (w). Hence also we find a Command given forth, that all the Angels of God should worship him (x); and that every Tongue should confess, that he is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father, who has put all Things under his Feet,

(r) *Philip* ii. 5-- See also *Whitby in loco.* (s) *John* ii. v. 26, 27. (t) *Rev.* iii. 21. (u) *Luke* xix. 12. (w) *Matt.* xxviii. 18. (x) *Heb.* i. 6.

Feet (y), and set him at his own Right-hand in the heavenly Places, far above all Principality, and Power, and Might, and Dominion, and every Name that is named, not only in this World, but also in that which is to come (z). This being therefore so plainly the Case, and such the Appointment of our heavenly Father, that our dear Redeemer should be thus exalted, it was not only necessary for him to be in all Things made like to his Brethren, that he might be a faithful High-Priest in Things pertaining to God, to make Reconciliation for the Sins of the People; but his Sufferings also had a further End, both with regard to himself, and to us; to wit, to qualify him the better for his present Government, and for that Lordship of the World, which is now committed to him.

We have naturally a much greater Sympathy, a greater Fellow-feeling, and a much more tender Concern and Compassion for the Sufferings of a Man, than we have for those of a Beast, or other Creature; because we know what it is to suffer as a Man by Experience; and the being Men ourselves, gives us a more tender Regard for that Species, than for any other Kind of Creatures whatever. And therefore, to increase that tender Concern, which our blessed Redeemer had for us before, it seemed good to the Father of Mercies, being about to bestow the Government

(y) 1 Cor. xv. 27.

(z) Ephes. i. 20, 21.

of this World upon him, and to make him the great Judge and Decider of our future Fates ; *it seemed good*, I say, to the *Father of Mercies*, that the Person that should enter into this exalted Station, should beforehand become incarnate *himself* ; that he should know, by *Experience*, what it was to be the Creature he governed ; and that, from being a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with Grief, himself, he might the more feelingly and more tenderly sympathize, and compassionate the Afflictions of his *suffering Brethren*. The Government was to be on his Shoulders ; but Mankind should first become as *his Brethren* : He should be so nearly allied to *that Nature*, and so well acquainted with its Wants, and Weaknesses, and Infirmities, as should make him a very merciful *Saviour*, a very tender and compassionate *Judge*, and, in a word, dispose him to make all the Allowances that the Nature of Things will admit of. And thus, *though he was a Son*, as the Apostle has observed, *yet learned he Obedience by the Things which he suffered* (a). God would not give us over, no, not even into the Hands of his *Son*, till he was first in all things made like to his Brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High-Priest in things pertaining to God, *to make Reconciliation for the Sins of the People* ; and till he had suffered, being

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(a) *Heb. v. 8.*

tempted himself, that he might be able to succour them that are tempted.

And now, to APPLY what has been said: What a most beautiful View does this give us of the great Wisdom and Goodness of our heavenly Father! What a glorious Prospect, I say, does this give us of God's Care and Concern for his Creatures! How abundantly does it shew us, that he indeed *is good to all*, and that *his tender Mercies are over all his Works* (*b*)! How does it shew us, that his Ways are not as our Ways, nor his Thoughts as our Thoughts; that, instead of delivering us up into the Hands of that *Destroyer*, to whose Temptations we had chosen to hearken, even to the apostatizing from him, and his Government, he has, on the contrary, delivered us into the Hands of a merciful *Saviour*, and yet not into *his*, till he had loved us even to Death, and been in all Points tempted as we are, that so his Concern for us might be so much the greater! Blessed and glorious God! Thou most merciful Father Almighty! What a Concern hast Thou herein expressed for us thy poor sinful and apostate Creatures! And how ought we to call upon our Souls, and all that is within us, to bless and praise thy Name for this thy Goodness to us, for this thy Goodness to the Sons of Men! Hence also may we learn,

(*b*) *Psal.* cxiv. 9.

In the *Second Place*, The great Obligations we are under to our *Lord* and *Saviour*, the Author and Finisher of our Faith, the Maker of our *Reconciliation*, and the Restorer of our lost *Immortality*. The Work of our Redemption was no easy Task. He had many and grievous Temptations, many and grievous Calamities, to contend and struggle with. And it must, no doubt, be a very great Trial, more than at present we can easily think of, and a great Proof of his Love and Regard for us, notwithstanding all the Encouragement that was set before him, and which, as our *High-Priest*, relates to our *Advantage*, for so happy and glorious a Being to be debased in the manner he was, and to go through such a State of Reproach, Contempt, and Suffering, as his Descent from Heaven to Earth exposed him to. The Height of Happiness from which he fell, must make the Hardships of his Fall the heavier, and add a tenfold Weight to every Woe. Yet such was his Love, that, to accomplish our Salvation, he readily made the forbidding and dreadful Exchange of Heaven for Earth, Respect and Honour for Reproach and Shame, Riches for Poverty, and Life for Death; and cheerfully yielded to put Immortality off, and encounter Death in its most frightful Forms, that we, how amazing! might put Immortality on, and *reign in Life*, through his *Obedience* for us. And, to go on:

In the *Third Place*, Let us all hence be exhorted to return to our Duty to this gracious God, and to submit to this merciful and loving Saviour. Can you at all doubt their most gracious Designs? Can you so much as suspect they can require any thing from you, but what is really and truly for your Good and Welfare? Abhorred be the Thought! Let it be rejected with the highest Indignation! So good a God, so kind and compassionate a Saviour, can require nothing but what is for our Good. What was it but this, our Good, and our Salvation, that gave Birth to all this we have been speaking of? And would God send his Son, would the Son come chearfully, to die a painful Death for us, if they were not great Lovers of Souls? if they had not a tender Regard for our Welfare? Can he that bought us with his Blood, be any-way our Enemy? Must not all his Commandments, as well as all his Sufferings, be calculated for the Promotion of our true Felicity? The Nature of the Case must oblige us to think so. It speaks itself, and needs no further Proof. Come then, Sinners, and throw down your Arms; submit yourselves at the Feet of this Saviour. No longer listen to the Temptations of the *grand Seducer*; but fly into the Arms of a merciful Father, and of him who has shewn himself so much your Friend, as that, to save your Lives, he was willing to lay down his own. Some of his Commandments

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may, perhaps, be unpleasing to those that have long been accustomed to a different Course ; but you may assure yourselves they are all of them necessary, and that you cannot be happy without Obedience to them, or it had never been so strenuously required from you. Hearken then to the Voice of this *Divine Physician* ; and, though his Physic should not be so pleasant to your false and distemper'd Tastes, as that forbidden Fruit you have been used to feed on, yet assure yourselves it is necessary for your Health and Safety, and that you cannot be recovered or restored without it ; and let this reconcile you to all his Commandments, to all his sacred Precepts, and divine Injunctions. Let it administer Comfort,

In the *Fourth Place*, to dejected Souls, that are sinking under the Weight and Burden of their Sins, and want Encouragement to hope for Mercy. Remember the Works of the Most High. Call to mind what he has done for your Salvation, and doubt not his Willingness to promote and further it. God is not your Enemy, if you yourselves are not so. He that died to save Sinners, even the chief of Sinners, cannot be unwilling, that Sinners should be saved. He has, on the contrary, assured us, that he most affectionately desires their Welfare ; and that all that come to him, shall meet with a gracious Reception, and
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shall in no-wise be cast out (c). His Bowels yearn over returning and penitent Sinners, and he rejoices over them, as over that which was lost, but is found ; which was dead, but is now made alive. All his Actions when on Earth, and all the Messages he has sent us by the Hands of his Apostles from Heaven, are an abundant Demonstration of the Truth of this. Let it also comfort,

In the *Fifth* Place, the Sincere and Upright, under all their unavoidable Failings. Let it convince and assure them, that they have to do with a merciful God, and with a kind and compassionate Jesus. You are to be judged by one of your Brethren, by one that is cloathed with your Nature, who has been a Man himself, and had a Fellow-feeling of all your Infirmities ; so that you need not doubt, but that he will seriously consider your Frame, and pity and compassionate your Weakness ; for he knows what it is to be tempted himself, and to be surrounded with enticing and ensnaring Objects. Yet, let not this tempt us to neglect his Precepts, or wilfully to swerve from his holy Commandments. For though he will pass by the Failings of sincere and upright Minds, and put the most favourable Construction upon all their Actions, yet he was not appointed to clear the obstinate and perverse Soul, that sins in a wilful and deliberate Manner. No, he suffered on purpose

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to shew us the Evil of this ; to convince us, that, though his Father was gracious, he had yet an utter Averſion to Sin, even ſuch an utter Averſion, as that he would not accept our Repentance, but through his Mediation and Sufferings for that Cauſe and End. And therefore, though this Doctrine is a Point of great Comfort to pious and upright Minds under their Failings, and Sins of Infirmary, yet does it give no Countenance to the wilful Sinner ; but rather aſſures him, on the other hand, that God is juſt and terrible againſt Sin and Sinners, and that he that ſpared not his Son, when he became our Saviour, will be far from ſparing thoſe obſtinate and obdurate Wretches, whom neither the Conſideration of his Juſtice or Mercy has Influence enough to reclaim. Let ſuch look to the Sufferings of *Chriſt*, and fear and tremble at the more terrible Judgments that await themſelves ; for to ſuch as them God is, and will be, *a conſuming Fire*.

And to conclude, and ſhut up all, in the *Sixth* and *Laſt* Place, Let it adminiſter Comfort alſo to the Tempted. Let them remember, that their *Saviour* was *tempted* ; that he knows what it is to be ſo ; and that he ſuffered, being tempted, for this very Reaſon, that he might be *able to ſuccour them that are tempted*. Fear therefore no Temptations or Sufferings to which your Obedience to him may expoſe you ; for he has a tender Senſe of what
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Temptations and Sufferings are, and has assured you, that he will not be wanting to afford you all needful Relief. But I shall now leave you with those Words of the *Apostle*, in the latter End of a succeeding Chapter: *Seeing then that we have a great High-Priest, that is passed into the Heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our Profession. For we have not an High-Priest which cannot be touched with the Feeling of our Infirmities; but was in all Points tempted like as we are, yet without Sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain Mercy, and find Grace to help in time of Need (d).*

Consider what has been said: And may the Lord give you Understanding in all Things, both to know and do his Will; to whom be Glory and Honour, both now and for ever! *Amen.*

(d) *Heb. iv. 14, 15, 16.*





S E R M O N XIII.

Of the great Benefit of Consideration.

Psalm cxix. 59.

*I thought on my Ways, and turned my Feet
unto thy Testimonies.*

IT must, no doubt, appear strange at first Sight, what has been so often observed, to the Shame of too many Professors, that Men, not only believing a God, but professing a Religion which they at the same time declare to be from God, should be so little influenced by it, as we see they generally are, and act so contrary to it in their Life and Conduct. But, as the best Medicines cannot heal, if not applied, neither can the best Arguments be supposed to persuade, if they are not rightly and duly attended to, and worked into the Mind, as all Motives and Arguments should, by se-

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rious Thought, and sober Consideration. Would we therefore have our *Fruit unto Holiness*, and our *End everlasting Life*? Are we any-way solicitous to answer the End of our Being, and to lay up a *good Foundation against the Time to come*? Are we ambitious of standing Candidates for immortal Glory, for an *Inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away* (a)? Let us then follow the *Psalmist's* Example, and use his *Means*, that we may gain his *End*. Let us set ourselves to *think on our Ways*, that we also may *turn our Feet to God's Testimonies*.

It is with a Design to persuade you to this, that I have now turned your Thoughts upon the present Subject; and God grant it may have its Effect, and succeed to our mutual Advantage! May it please the great *Father of Lights* to shine with Light and Power on our Minds, and to give our Wills a due and proper Byass, that we may not only have the Wisdom to *know*, but that good Understanding which they have who *fulfil* his Commandments, and square their Lives according to his Word.

The *Text* naturally divides itself into these Two Parts; *namely*, The Course the *Psalmist* took, and the prosperous and happy Event of it. The Course he took was, *to think on his Ways*; and the happy Effect which it had on him was, that it induced him *to turn his Feet*

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(a) 1 Pet. i. 4.

to God's Testimonies. *I thought on my Ways, and turned my Feet unto thy Testimonies.*

And, FIRST, Let us consider *the Course* which he took. *I thought*, says he, *on my Ways*. This is a Duty, indeed, which in some Sense belongs to *all*. It is the Part of *all* to consider their Ways, of what Nature and Kind they are; that, if wrong, they may see and amend; and, if right, may go on and pursue them, and take all the Comfort such a Course will yield them. But though this is the Duty of all, yet is it more especially the Duty of Sinners, and such as are walking in the Paths of Vice. It behoves them more especially to review and consider their Ways, and to what they will lead in the End of them. But, as to the Arguments and Motives to this, we shall have occasion to consider them more at large hereafter. In the mean time, it is more immediately our Business to shew the Nature of this Consideration, or what the sober *thinking on our Ways* implies; or, which comes all to the same, in what manner we should think on our Ways, that it may bring forth the Fruits of Repentance, and have the same Effect on *us* it had on *him*. And here;

First, The right *thinking on our Ways*, implies in it a *serious Consideration*, that we are *Sinners*, and of the great *Evil* and *Unreasonableness* of such a Course. All Men will own they are *Sinners*; but there are but few that consider, what that Word *implies*. They are

apt to look upon Sin as a Matter of no great Moment, or rather as essential to the Happiness of human Nature ; and, as there is no Man to be found who is altogether free from it, as there are none but what are Sinners in some Degree or other, such Reflections help to keep them in Countenance, and they sit down with the comfortable Consideration, that they are but like other Men, and as they see the Generality are that dwell around them. They are Sinners, they own ; but then they see not the Evil of Sin, nor do they set themselves to view it in its true Deformity. They rather look upon it, on the other hand, as a pleasant Thing, and as a *Fruit* which should not be *forbidden* ; and on the Laws made against it, as what should be rather repealed than continued, and discouraged instead of regarded. Vain and unthinking Souls ! Would they have the Laws of Heaven repealed for them ? The Laws of Nature, and of Nature's God ? Are they wiser than infinite Wisdom, or better than infinite Goodness ? Should the Creature give Law to its Maker, or set up its Will against his ? But, though this is enough to stop the Sinner's Mouth, yet I would not, methinks, stop here ; I would not only *silence*, but *convince* him, and set his Error, if possible, in so strong a Light, as shall even force him to see and confess it. Wilt thou know then, *O vain Man !* who thus judgest, who lookest on Sin as a pleasant and desirable Thing ;

Thing ; and on the Laws against it, with an evil Eye ; who thinkest it pity it is not more tenderly dealt with, and that Men are not allowed to indulge with Impunity in it ; Wilt thou know, that thy Desire is unreasonable ? Wouldst thou be convinced of the evil Effects of it ? Suppose it then for once as you would have it, and view the charming Fruits resulting from it—Let Conscience be no more. Let Law lie dormant. Let Murders, Robberies, Rapes, be Crimes no longer. Let every Man have Leave to work his Will, and pave his Way to Greatness how he can. Let Men be Bears and Wolves to one another. Let Mercy, Faith, and Truth, be banished from them ; and let their Opposites possess their Place. Let Faction, Envy, Discord, every Vice, have its full Swing, and rage without Controul—Nay !—Do not startle at the dreadful Scene. It does but represent the State you wished ; and what, were Laws no more, must be the Case.

But, perhaps, you would not have all Laws abolished. Some Laws you think are absolutely needful. They are so ; and so they are all. The Laws of God are none of them vain or needless ; they are all of them calculated for the public Good ; and all designed to make his Creatures happy ; nor can you name so much as one, which has not a Tendency to that glorious End. But human Laws, you will say, may secure the public Peace,

Peace, and reduce Men to some kind of Order. In some Degree, no doubt of it, they may; but far, far short of making a *happy* World of it, or even *so happy* as it is at present. But this, in short, is giving up the Cause: It is allowing, that Laws are *needful*; that they are needful for the Preserving of *Order*; and that Order is needful to *Happiness*. Allow but this, and there is no need to dispute any further; for, shift the Scene into what Worlds you please, you will find the Case the same, and that Laws are full as needful there as here; or, however, that Temper of Mind which the Laws are designed to establish, and which no other Laws than those of God can reach. Let the Scene, for Example, be *moved* from the *Surface* of this Earth to its *Atmosphere*, or from weak and feeble Men, to those mighty *Angels that excel in Strength*, those *Ministers of God, that do his Pleasure*; and suppose them excused from *doing his Commandments*, and from *hearkening to the Voice of his Word*. Let them all be mere arbitrary Beings, with full Power to act as they please, and without Laws to oppose or controul them. Let there be no Order, no Government at all among them. Let them fight and contend for Honour and Preferment. Let Might be the Rule of Right. Let them divide into differing and contending Parties, and wage perpetual War with one another. Suppose but this, and you have converted them into

so many *Furies*. Then let the *Devils* too be freed from their Chains, and let loose to destroy at Discretion, and act their Pleasure upon poor Mankind, while God looks on an unconcerned Spectator, and leaves his Creatures to do all their Will. What must ensue from hence? What but *Confusion*?—What but Confusion to the *whole Creation*? Ruin and Misery among all God's Works? Learn then from hence to look on Laws as *useful*, useful and *needful* unto all God's Creatures, and on him who breaks them, as a Foe to God, Foe to himself, and Foe to all around him.

And is it this, my Soul, to be a *Sinner*? Is it to be a Fomenter of Division and Disorder, and an Enemy to the Happiness of God's Creation? A Creature, in short, that must be either reformed or destroyed? That will neither be happy itself, nor let others be happy about it? And which therefore calls for Destruction, were it for no other Reason than this, that its Destruction is needful for the public Welfare; and that even Heaven itself, were such admitted into it, would be a Place of Bliss and Happiness no longer? Is there such an Evil and Malignity contained in Sin? Is it such a Root of Bitterness, and wild Disorder, that God is obliged, even in Mercy, to abhor and punish it? It is fit then that Sinners should duly consider their Ways, and learn to look upon Sin as a trifling Thing no longer.

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But, to go on : *Secondly*, To think aright on our Ways, *implies in it*, not only a serious Consideration, that we are *Sinners* in the general, and of the Evil and Unreasonableness of such a Course ; but it implies further, a more *particular* Consideration of the several *particular Sins* we have been guilty of, with their several *Aggravations*. It is not enough only to consider, that we are *Sinners*, that we are Sinners like the rest of Mankind ; but we should come nearer and closer to the Point, and set our Sins, as it were, in Order before us, and the Register of our Iniquities as before our Eyes ; should bring ourselves to the Commandments of God, and see how many of his Laws we have broken, in how many Things we have erred and gone astray, and how many the Indictments are that lie against us. And, for this End, *an Exposition of the Commandments*, would be highly proper on such an Occasion, that we may mark as we go along, wherein we have varied from them, whether with regard to Omissions or Commissions ; and thus draw up a Catalogue of our numerous Sins, or rather, as far as we can, of the Sorts and Kinds of them ; for who is there of us, that can find out all his Errors, or the Number of all his Transgressions (b) ? Then we should consider further, the *Aggravations* of our Iniquities ; as their being committed against Light and Knowledge ; the Convictions of our

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(b) Psalm xix. 12.

own Minds ; the Checks of Conscience ; the Threats of the Gospel ; and, it may be, Resolutions and Vows to the contrary : That they are not the Sins of ignorant unenlightned *Heathens*, but of such as have the Light of the *Gospel*, and have had perhaps a sober Education, and been instructed therein from our Youth. These are terrible Aggravations of Sins, and such as greatly enhance the Guilt of them. And such a serious Consideration of our Ways as this, will present us with a very different View of them, and, by the Blessing of God, have a very different and better Effect, than can be supposed to arise from our only considering ourselves as *Sinners* in a more *loose* and *general* Way. Such a thinking, I say, upon our Sins, as this, has certainly a very natural Tendency to lead us to an hearty and sincere Repentance ; and we must be very much hardened indeed, if it has not that Effect on us. But again :

Thirdly, To this particular Consideration of our Sins, their Nature and Aggravations, we should likewise add the yet further *Consideration*, and impress our Minds as much as ever we can with it, of the *fearful* and *fatal Effects* of going on and *continuing in them*. We should not only consider, that we are Sinners, and that we have been Sinners in such and such Instances ; but we should likewise set ourselves to consider, where these Things will end, and to what this Road we are travelling

in will bring us. When we come to consider ourselves as sinful Creatures, though we *see* the Unreasonableness of such a Conduct, and are *convinced*, that it is more reasonable to obey God's Laws, and to turn our Feet into the Ways of his Testimonies, yet the Flesh is weak, and loves to be indulged, and Sin is grateful to the sensual Nature. Long Custom has made it familiar, and it is not to be parted from without some Regret, and some Pleadings of the Flesh for our Continuance in it. It has but too strong a Party within us, and we are but too apt to indulge it; and therefore there is need to summon all our Art and Strength to expel this subtle and bewitching Guest; which, tho' a terrible Foe, yet appears in the Garb of a Friend, and salutes us with Words *soft* as *Oil*, though in fact they are *drawn Swords*. There is need, I say, to view it through a true Perspective, and to strip it of its Mask and Disguise, that we may see its Deformity in its proper Colours, and may learn to flee from it as *from the Face of a Serpent*. And, to this End, it will be proper for us to consider its evil and mischievous Tendency, both with regard to *this World*, and that *to come*. As,

In the first Place, That it really robs us of that Peace and Tranquillity, which is the chief Felicity to be found in *this Life*. For, when all is said, a Man's Happiness must arise from himself, from the Temper and Disposition

sition of his Mind ; and no outward Circumstances can ever make him happy, who has a Source of Unhappiness within his Breast. And he who believes a God, and Day of Retribution, let him pretend what he will, can never be so easy in his Sins, as not to be forced, at some Seasons, to reflect with trembling on the Condition he knows himself in. While all Things indeed go on smoothly, such Thoughts as these may not attack him, and he may make himself tolerably easy, while he thinks the evil Day afar off: But, as it was in the Case of *Belshazzar*, let but a Hand-writing be seen on the Wall, or any Danger appear making towards him, and his Courage immediately fails, his Countenance changes, and his Joints are loosed, and he trembles, like *Felix*, at the Thoughts of a Judgment to come (c). And to what is this owing, but to the want of that Peace which is the Fruit of Virtue? Did he know himself at Peace with God, these things would have no such Effect on him, nor would they have any thing so terrible and tremendous in them. He that knows he has God for his Friend, he that knows he has God on his Side, is sufficiently armed against such Fears as these. Such Peace, such glorious Peace, have they which love God's Law. And is it worth any Man's while, to rob and deprive himself of such Peace as this, for all the Pleasures that his

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(c) *Dan. v. 5, 6. and Acts xxiv. 25.*

Sins can yield him? Pleasures, indeed, that last for awhile; but, at the same time, lay a Foundation for Remorse and Terror, and wound the Mind which they pretend to ease. Nor does Sin only deprive us of our Peace of Mind, by filling us with guilty and tormenting Fears, but it is its Nature to unhinge and unsettle us, and make our Breasts like a *troubled Sea*, which cannot be at Rest. The very Service of Vice is an *Egyptian Bondage*, a Slavery to tumultuous and unruly Passions, always calling for Gratification, for ever craving, and never content or satisfied. Nor is this all; Sin does not only rob us of that Peace, which the Practice of Virtue would yield us, but it plunges us also into many and grievous Evils. I speak not now of those in the other World; Sin has likewise a Tendency even to bring us to Punishment here. How many stout and strong Men have been slain by it, and brought down with Pain and Sorrow to the Grave! Their *Flesh* has been chastened with *Pain*, and their *Bones* with *strong Pain*, and they have been cut off in the *Midst* of their Days. So that we may say just the Reverse of Vice, which *Solomon* does of Wisdom (*d*); namely, that *Shortness of Days is in her Right-hand, and, in her Left-hand, Want and Dishonour. Her Ways are Ways of Bitterness, and her Paths are void of Peace. She is Death to all them that lay*

(d) Prov. iii. 16, 17, 18.

lay hold upon her, and most unhappy is every one that retains her. To which may be added what he says of the Harlot (e), *She has cast down many wounded; yea, many strong Men have been slain by her. Her House is the Way to Hell, going down to the Chambers of Death.* But it would be well for the Sinner, were its Effects to reach no further, than only merely to bring him to Death, and his Life to the Pit of the Grave. The Hurt it does here is as nothing to what it will do hereafter, when it will not only exclude us from *Heaven*, but cause us to be *punished with an everlasting Destruction from the Presence of the Lord, and from the Glory of his Power, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven, with his mighty Angels, in flaming Fire, taking Vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (f).*

And, *First*, A sinful Life will assuredly exclude us from *Heaven*. There is nothing plainer in the whole Book of God than this. It is indeed so plain, that it would be but trespassing upon your Patience to attempt to prove it. The Light of Nature teaches it, as well as Scripture; and *Reason*, as well as *Divine Revelation*. For as every Sinner, of what Degree soever, is more or less an Enemy to Society, and a Source of Unhappiness to himself and others, it is but proper he should be excluded from those blissful Regions, which
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(e) Chap. vii. ult.

(f) 2 *Thess.* i. 7, 8, 9.

are designed for none but blessed and happy Beings, and who could not be happy, were Sinners admitted amongst them. Every happy Society must be under good *Regulations* ; and the more these Regulations contribute to the public Peace, and to the Happiness of each Individual, the more Necessity is there for their Observation, and for the Exclusion of such, as by breaking in upon these Regulations, do as much as they can to destroy the public Peace, and, of course, to overturn the general Welfare. It is a common Saying, and founded in Truth and Reason, That, if there were no Laws, there would be no living. It is, indeed, commonly applied to living here on Earth ; but it is equally true with regard to every Part of the Universe, and in every State of Life, as well as this. There is therefore a *Necessity*, that Sinners be excluded Heaven ; a Necessity in the *Nature of Things* ; it being necessary, that such should be banished, that the Righteous and Just may be happy ; and that such as cannot be happy with, may at last be made happy without them.

And is there a Happiness to be enjoyed hereafter ? A perfect Happiness, unmixed with any Alloy ? And, which crowns the Whole, an everlasting Happiness, where there shall be no more Death, any more than Pain or Sorrow ? And shall all Sinners be banished this Happiness ? Shall no impenitent, unre-
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formed Transgressors, be ever admitted to the Enjoyment of it? He that sins against *God*, must then assuredly wrong his own *Soul*; and how *wise* soever he may think himself *now*, in his *latter End* must find himself a *Fool*. -

But, though this is a dreadful and irretrievable Loss, and such as will sting the Sinner to the Quick hereafter, yet this is not all the Mischief Sin will do him. It will not only deprive him of the greatest Happiness, but involve him further in the greatest Misery. For *the Wicked shall be turned into Hell (g)*; and all those that rebel against God, shall have their final Portion in a *Lake of Fire (h)*. They shall be cast into *Hell, into the Fire that shall never be quenched: Where their Worm dieth not, and the Fire is not quenched (i)*. There is such an Evil and Malignity in Sin, such a natural Tendency to create Disorder, and to disturb the Happiness of God's Creation, that it is not enough for its Discouragement, merely that Sinners be excluded from Heaven, but that they be also made fearful Examples of God's just Displeasure, that all Beings may see and fear, and learn from Hell itself the Worth of Virtue. Would we therefore see the Evil of Sin in proper Colours, we must not only look into this World, but must carry our Views to the other,

(g) *Pf. ix. 17.*(h) *Rev. xx. ult. and xxi. 8.*(i) *Mark ix. 43, 44.*

other, and there contemplate its tremendous End.

But let this suffice as to the Nature of this Consideration, as it implies, *First*, A serious Consideration, that we are Sinners ; and of the Evil and Unreasonableness of such a Course. *Secondly*, A more particular Consideration of our several particular Sins, with their several Aggravations. And, *Thirdly*, A serious Consideration of the fearful and fatal Effects of going on and continuing in them.

Come we NEXT therefore (but in this we need be but brief) to consider the happy *Effect* of such a Course, as it is here set down by the *Psalmist* : *I thought on my Ways, and turned my Feet unto thy Testimonies.* This was the Effect which it had upon *him*, that it made him *turn his Feet to God's Testimonies.* It turned him from the Ways of Death, to those of Life and Peace. A very happy and blessed Effect, and which is here recorded for our Admonition, that we also may act in like manner. And, indeed, it is but reasonable to expect, that such a Course as this should be productive of such an Event. There is nothing extraordinary in it ; nor is it only the *Psalmist's* Experience, but has been the Experience of Thousands. It is, indeed, the first Step to Conversion, and such a Step as whoever once takes, will, in all Probability, take all the rest. So it was with the *Prodigal Son* : When he came to consider his

Ways,

Ways, and the Plight they had brought him into; *when he came*, as our Lord stiles it, *to himself*, from a State of Folly and Madness, to cool and sober Reflection, and to a serious Consideration of the foolish and unfilial Part he had been acting, he immediately makes this Resolution; *I will arise, and go to my Father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son: Make me as one of thy hired Servants* (k). And to the same Purpose God himself is introduced, as speaking thus of the People of Israel; *O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter End* (l)! And again; *Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Consider your Ways* (m); thereby plainly intimating, that Consideration is not only a good Step towards Conversion, but that it is as it were half the Work; and that, if Men would but be brought to the *one*, there would be no great Reason to doubt of the *other*.

But let us now turn *Doctrine* into *Exhortation*; and let me APPLY what has been said upon this Subject, by endeavouring to persuade you to put it in Practice. And, to this End, let me intreat you to consider,

In the *First Place*, That it becomes you to do this as *Men*, and as *reasonable Creatures*. To what End can we imagine was our Reason

Q 9

given

(k) Luke xv. 11, &c.

(l) Deut. xxxii. 29.

(m) Haggai i. 5. 7.

given us, but that we should act in a reasonable Manner? Why were we made capable of discerning between Good and Evil, but that we should choose the one, and flee and eschew the other? That we should not act as Beings that have no Understanding, without Forethought or Consideration, but as wise and rational Agents? Must not he be accounted a Fool, that acts without Sense and Reason, and that in Matters of the highest Importance? Let us then learn to consider our Ways, that we be not as *Fools*, but as *Wise*. The Light of Reason is sufficient to teach us, that nothing can make itself, and that there must therefore be some First Being, from whence all other Beings proceeded: And from the Wisdom which is seen in his Works, it is very easily collected, that this First Being is wise and intelligent. For, *He that planted the Ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the Eye, shall he not see? He that chastiseth the Heathen, shall he not correct? He that teacheth Man Knowledge, shall he not know (n)?* And if he be wise and intelligent, he must make us for some wise Ends, and not endow us with Reason in vain. Nor is it to be imagined, that he will make no Distinction between such as *use*, and such as *abuse*, their Reason; between such as improve, and misimprove, their Talents; but that he will take a time to call them to Account, and to reward them according

(n) *Pf.* xciv. 9, 10.

according as their Works have been, both with regard to *him*, their *Neighbours*, and *themselves*. These are Lessons which all may learn, and which it is expected of all that they should learn, and steer and regulate their Lives accordingly. But I am not speaking to *Heathens*, who have only the *Light of Nature*, but to such as name *Christ's Name*, and have the much greater Light of the Gospel. And therefore I proceed,

In the *Second Place*, To put you in mind, that if it becomes us to consider as Men, it must yet much more become us as *Christians*; and that if they who have but *one Talent*, are bound to improve it, we must sure be much more, who have *Ten*. Consider this therefore, *ye that forget God, lest he tear you in Pieces, and there be none to deliver (o)*. The Heathens, the Men of *Nineveh*, yea, the Inhabitants of *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*, shall rise up in Judgment against us; and it will be more tolerable at the Day of Judgment, even for such Sinners as those, than for us, if we neglect to consider our Ways under much greater Light than they had (*p*). *We ought therefore, as the Apostle exhorts us, to give the more earnest Heed to the Things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.* We Christians, especially, are under the highest Obligations to this, above any other People

Q q 2

what-

(*o*) *Pf.* l. 22.(*p*) *Matt.* xi. 20, &c. and xii. 41,

whatever. For, as the Apostle justly goes on to observe, *if the Word spoken by Angels was stedfast, and every Transgression and Disobedience received a just Recompence of Reward, how shall we escape, if we neglect so great Salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them Witness, both with Signs and Wonders, and with divers Miracles, and Gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own Will (q)?* We are not left to be instructed by the Light of Nature, or to gather from that wherewith we shall come before God, and bow ourselves before the Most High. We have no need to propose it as a *Query*, whether we are designed for an after Existence; but have Life and Immortality clearly set before us; and are assured of a Judgment-Day, when God will judge the World in Righteousness, when he shall summon all Nations to appear before him, and they shall all be judged according to their Works. We know that the Dead shall rise, that they that sleep in the Dust shall awake, some to everlasting Life, and some to Shame, and everlasting Contempt: And are expressly assured of a *Revelation of the righteous Judgment of God, who will render to every Man according to his Deeds: To them who, by patient Continuance in well-doing, seek for Glory, and Honour, and Immortality, eternal Life; but*

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(q) Heb. ii. 1, 2, 3, 4.

unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the Truth, but obey Unrighteousness, Indignation and Wrath, Tribulation and Anguish, upon every Soul of Man that doth Evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile : For there is no Respect of Persons with God (r). These are Truths, which, however dark or doubtful to other Nations, that are not blessed with divine Revelation, are yet revealed to us in the clearest and strongest Manner ; and therefore, whatever others do, it behoves us to consider our Ways ; and Woe be to us, if we do it not !

But, to go on : *Thirdly*, God does not only call us to this by his *Word*, but also further, by the Voice of his *Providence*. It is the End of all his Patience, and long-suffering Goodness, as the Apostle *Paul* has expressly assured us, that he may thereby lead and invite us to consider our Ways, and be wise, and to avert our Ruin by a true Repentance. *Despiseſt thou*, says he, *the Riches of his Goodness, and Forbearance, and Long-suffering, not knowing that the Goodness of God leadeth thee to Repentance* (s) ? He is speaking here to the unbelieving *Jews* ; and declares, that the Reason of God's sparing them so long, even notwithstanding their Rejection and unjust Usage of his Son, who was sent to them, was with a Design, if possible, to lead them to Repentance ; that their Destruction was respited for this very End, to give them time to work out

(r) *Rom. ii. 5---11.*(s) *Rom. ii. 4.*

out their Salvation. And St. Peter likewise tells them the same, that *The Lord is not slack concerning his Promise (as some Men count Slackness) ; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to Repentance (t).* And, to the same Purpose, a few Verses after, *And account that the Long-suffering, says he, of our Lord is Salvation ; even as our beloved Brother Paul also, according to the Wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you (u).* And, as this is the Design of his long Patience, so is it likewise of all those Afflictions which are not designed to destroy us. For, where that is the Case, his Patience is then at an End. But, in all other Cases, where he afflicts, but not destroys us, there Judgment and Mercy are blended and mixed together ; and the Design of all such Dispensations as these is, to lead us to *think on our Ways*, and to induce us to *turn our Feet to his Testimonies*, that he may be merciful to us, and our Souls may live. *Before I was afflicted*, says the Psalmist, *I went astray ; but now have I kept thy Word (w).* And again, *It is good for me, that I have been afflicted ; that I might learn thy Statutes (x).* And again, *I know, O Lord, that thy Judgments are right, and that in Faithfulness thou hast afflicted me (y).*

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(t) 2 Pet. iii. 9. (u) Ver. 15. (w) Pf. cxix.
67. (x) Ver. 71. (y) Ver. 75.

I shall only add further, in the *Fourth* and last Place, That, as it is what we must come to one time or other, so we had better consider now, than be forced to consider, when Considering will do us no good. If we consider now, we may prevent our Ruin, and obtain a glorious and eternal Happiness; but our considering hereafter, will but increase our Pain, and help to constitute a Part of our Torment. If we have therefore any Regard to what is fit and proper, or to our obtaining an everlasting Salvation, and avoiding an everlasting Destruction, let us consider, in this our Day, the Things that belong to our Peace, and before they are hid from our Eyes: Let us think; *Let us think on our Ways, and turn our Feet, as we ought, to God's Testimonies:* Which God of his Mercy grant, through *Jesus Christ!* Amen.





S E R M O N XIV.

*Of the Resurrection of Christ from
the Dead.*

Acts ii. 31, 32.

*He, seeing this before, spake of the Resurrection
of Christ, that his Soul was not left in Hell,
neither his Flesh did see Corruption. This
Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all
are Witnesses.*

WHAT I have now read, are the Words
of the Apostle *Peter* to a very nume-
rous Assembly on the Day of *Pentecost*; and
are Part of a Proof, produced by him from
the Prophet *David*, of the Resurrection of
Christ from the Dead; the Occasion of which
was as follows: Our Lord, as appears from
the preceding Chapter, having shewn himself
alive

alive after his Passion, by many infallible Proofs, being seen of his Apostles for the Space of Forty Days, and speaking to them of the Things pertaining to the Kingdom of God, being now about to be taken from them to the Right-hand of God in the Heavens, gave them Commandment, that they should abide at Jerusalem, till they received the Promise of the Holy Ghost ; which, he assured them, should be given before many Days. And accordingly, as we are informed in the Beginning of this Chapter, when the Day of Pentecost was fully come (which was but Ten Days after, and answers to our Whitsunday), they were all with one Accord in one Place : And suddenly there came a Sound from Heaven, as of a rushing mighty Wind ; and it filled all the House where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven Tongues, like as of Fire ; and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other Tongues, as the Spirit gave them Utterance. Which being noised abroad, a great Multitude came together ; and there being Men at that time at Jerusalem out of almost every Nation (then known) under Heaven, they were amazed, and marvelled, saying one to another, Are not all these which speak, Galileans ? And how then hear we every Man speaking in our own Tongue, wherein we were born ? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the Dwellers in

Mesopotamia, and in Judæa, and Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia; in Egypt, and in the Parts of Libya about Cyrene, and Strangers of Rome, Jews and Proselytes, Cretes and Arabians; we do hear them speak in our Tongues the wonderful Works of God. But others, not understanding these Languages, and taking it all for mere Jargon, would needs have it they were drunk with new Wine. Upon which, *Peter*, standing up with the *Eleven*, lift up his Voice, and said, *Ye Men of Judæa, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my Words: For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the Third (with us the Ninth) Hour of the Day; or the Time of the Morning Sacrifice, to which it is the Custom of the Jews to come fasting. But this is that, which was spoken by the Prophet Joel (a): And it shall come to pass in the last Days (saith God) I will pour out of my Spirit upon all Flesh; and your Sons and your Daughters shall prophesy, and your young Men shall see Visions, and your old Men shall dream Dreams: And on my Servants, and on my Handmaidens, I will pour out in those Days of my Spirit, and they shall prophesy. And I will shew Wonders in Heaven above, and Signs in the Earth beneath; Blood, and Fire, and Vapour of Smoke. The Sun shall be turned into Darkness, and the Moon into Blood, before that*

(a) Joel ii. 28, &c.

that great and notable Day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the Name of the Lord, shall be saved. Ye Men of Israel, hear these Words; Jesus of Nazareth, a Man approved of God among you, by Miracles, and Wonders, and Signs, which God did by him in the Midst of you, as ye yourselves also know; him, being delivered into your Power by the determinate Counsel and Foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked Hands have crucified and slain; whom God hath raised up, having loosed the Pains (or rather the Bands *) of Death, because it was not possible, that he should be holden of it. For David speaketh concerning him (b), I foresaw the Lord always before my Face; for he is on my Right-hand, that I should not be moved: Therefore did my Heart rejoice, and my Tongue was glad; moreover also my Flesh shall rest in Hope; because thou wilt not leave my Soul in Hell, neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy one to see Corruption. Thou hast made known to me the Ways of Life; thou shalt make me full of Joy with thy Countenance. Men and Brethren, let me freely speak to you of the Patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his Sepulchre is with us unto this Day: Therefore, being a Prophet, and knowing that God had sworn to him with an Oath, that of the Fruit of his Loins, according to the Flesh, he

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would

* Vide Poli Synops. Criticorum in Psalm. xviii. 3. & cxvi. 3. (b) Psalm. xvi. 8, &c.

would raise up Christ, to sit upon his Throne, he, seeing this before, spake of the Resurrection of Christ; that his Soul was not left in Hell, neither his Flesh did see Corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are Witnesses. And, being by the Right-hand of God (as he goes on) exalted, and having received of the Father the Promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the Heavens; but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my Right-hand, until I make thy Foes thy Footstool (c). Therefore let all the House of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. After this manner does our Text stand connected both with the preceding and following Context; the Proof arising from the Quotation being plainly this, That whereas *David* had expressly foretold, either with regard to himself, or some other, that God would not leave his Soul in Hell, nor suffer his Holy one to see Corruption; and whereas this was no-way true, with regard to *David* himself, whose Soul was left in Hell, and whose Flesh did see Corruption; therefore we must of course understand it of that remarkable Son of his, the *King Messiah*, of whom the Prophet in that Place must speak: Of the Truth of which Prediction, and that it is now fulfilled in the

Person

(c) Psalm cx. 1.

Person of *Jesus*, we all, says the *Apostle*, are Witnesses.

But, having said enough as to the Occasion, Intent, and Design of the Words, I shall now proceed to speak to them in the following Manner; *namely*,

FIRST, By way of *Explication*, or Inquiry into the Meaning of the Expression here used [His Soul was not left in Hell].

SECONDLY, By way of *Confirmation*, or Proof, that this was really and truly the Case.

After which I shall shut up all,
In the THIRD Place, with an Inference or two from the Whole.

And, FIRST, We are to inquire into the Meaning of the Expression here used, *his Soul was not left in Hell*; which will, at the same time, let us into the Meaning of *that Article*, in what is called the *Apostles Creed*; in which having professed our Belief of our Lord's Suffering, Death, and Burial, we further add, that *he descended into Hell*; and which, as is highly probable, was at first inserted from the Words of the Passage we are now upon. Nor was this Addition, says *Grotius*, superfluous; seeing it proves the separate Existence of the Soul from the Body,
which

which many Philosophers denied, and others doubted of*. It has indeed seemed strange to Multitudes of Christians, and will very likely to some who now hear me, that the Son of God should descend into *Hell*; and that the Time between his Death and Resurrection should be spent in so dismal a Place: And what renders it still more strange, is, that we never find him foretelling, or giving his Disciples the least Intimation of it, as he did of the other Circumstances of his Death and Sufferings. On the contrary, when expiring on the Cross, he cried out with a loud Voice, *It is finished* (d); and had before promised the penitent Thief, that *that Day* he should be with him in *Paradise* (e). And, if he went to *Paradise*, how could he go to *Hell*? Or what manner of Reason can be given, why he should? Is it, that it was any-way necessary, on account of our Redemption? The Holy Scriptures have no-where said so; nor is it ever reckoned as a Part of his Sufferings; nor did he himself ever seem to expect it; but, on the contrary, that, after his Death, his Soul should depart into *Paradise*; into which, if we will believe his own Words, it went that very Day. But how then shall we reconcile this with the Expression here used in the Text? or, I may add, with what he told *Mary Magdalene*,
after

* Grotius on Luke xxiii. 43.
(e) Luke xxiii. 43.

(d) John xix. 30.

after his Resurrection, *namely*, That he had not yet *ascended to his Father (f)*? For, if his Soul went to *Heaven*, it no-way agrees with this; and, to send it to *Hell*, cannot agree with its being in *Paradise*; unless this *Hell* and *Paradise* be all the same, which, as strange as it may appear at first Sight, is yet really the Truth of the Case. For it is indeed nothing but an *erroneous Translation* that has occasioned all this Darknes; the Want of a Word in our *Language* to answer the *Greek Word* (*αἶδης*) *Hades*, which the Apostle here makes use of, together with the Fears of giving Countenance to some (at that time) *exploded Tenets*, having led our *Translators* to translate it *Hell*; though they have once made it stand for the *Grave (g)*: Whereas it properly signifies the separate invifible State, the common Receptacle of the Dead in general, the Seats of separate Souls both Juft and Unjuft. For the *Greeks* comprehended all this under the common Name of *Hades*; an invifible Region, which they imagined under the Earth, whither the Souls of all descended after Death; and where they accordingly placed their *Elyfium*, or paradifical Fields for the *Good*, as well as their Regions of Pain for the *Bad*. So that, to go down to *Hades*, was with them the same thing, as to die; and to remain in *Hades*, as to remain in the State of the Dead, or in the invifible

(f) *John* xx. 17. (g) *1 Cor.* xv. 55.

invisible Region of departed Souls. And, as this was plainly the Sense of the Word with the antient *Greeks*, so does it seem as plainly to bear the same Sense in the *Sacred Writings*, where we meet with it several times; and where it is seldom, if ever, used in any other. For, to understand it of *Hell*, as we now understand that Word, must be far from consonant to Christian Verity; it being neither agreeable to Reason, nor Scripture, to send all Souls to *Hell*; to which yet they must certainly go, if that be the Meaning of *Hades*, or, as the *Jews* were wont to style it, of *Sheol*. For, *What Man is he*, says the Psalmist, *that liveth, and shall not see Death? Shall he deliver his Soul from the Hand of Sheol?* Or, according to the *Greek Translation*, *from the Hand of Hades* (b). And therefore *Eustathius* in *Theodoret*, upon the Words of the Psalmist, *Thou wilt not leave my Soul in Hell*, not only expressly calls *Hades* the Place of human Souls, but *Hilary* also, on those Words of the Psalmist (*Psal. cxxxix. 8.*); *If I make my Bed in Hell*, or *Sheol*, *thou art there*, tells us, That there is a Law universal and inviolable, for the Souls of Men to descend to *Hades*; and adds, that for this Reason *Christ* did it, because by it he fulfilled the whole Course and Order of human Nature. Our Saviour also tells us, with regard to *Hades*, that its *Gates shall not prevail against his Church* (i).

Upon

(b) *Psal. lxxxiv. 48.*

(i) *Mat. xvi. 18.*

Upon which the Gates of *Hell* will certainly never be shut, though the Gates of *Hades* will, till the *Resurrection*: And then, as we are informed by *St. Paul*, shall be sung the triumphant Song, *O Death, where is thy Sting? O Hades, where is thy Victory (k)?* We are likewise further informed, by our Saviour, that he *has the Keys both of Hades and Death (l)*. And when *Death* is represented as going to make great Havock, *Hades* likewise is spoken of as his constant Companion and Follower (*m*): Whereas certainly *Hell* does not always follow *Death*, though *Hades* is supposed so to do; for that, say the *Greeks*, receives *all mortal Men*. And, accordingly, at the last *Resurrection*, or Time of the final Judgment, *Death* and *Hades* are both represented, as delivering up their several Contents; that is, *Death* or the *Grave*, as surrendering the *Body*, which is its proper Prey; and *Hades*, as surrendering the *Soul*: After which, both *Death* and *Hades*, or the Seats both of Bodies and Souls, are represented as cast into the *Lake of Fire (n)*; as they undoubtedly will at the final Conflagration, by the Earth's being involved in *one universal Burning*, from its Surface quite down to its Centre.

But, having said enough to shew, that *Hades* cannot be *Hell*, or what the sacred Writers call *Gebenna*, let us now see why it cannot

S f mean

(k) 1 Cor. xv. 55. (l) Rev. i. 18. (m) Rev. vi. 8.
(n) Rev. xx. 13, 14.

mean *the Grave*. Great Pains, I am not ignorant, have been taken, in order to make it always suit with this Construction : But, besides that *the Grave*, any more than *Hell*, is very far from being *the House of all Men*, there are several Places where it cannot bear that Meaning, as might be easily shewn, both from *Homer*, and other *Greek Writers* ; but which, as our Business is chiefly with *Scripture*, I shall not at present allege. And here, it is very remarkable to our present Purpose, what we find related of the Patriarch *Jacob*, when he imagined his beloved *Joseph* torn in Pieces : *I will go down*, says he, *mourning to my Son to Hades* ; or, as it is in the *Hebrew*, to *Sheol* (o) : Where, as that Patriarch could not mean *Hell*, not once imagining his Son was there ; nor yet *the Grave*, as he did not think he had any, except in the Belly or Bowels of some wild Beast ; so could he only mean the Place of departed Spirits, and where he knew he should be joined to his Son in *Soul*, though not in *Body*. Nor does *Isaiah* seem to mean any thing else, when, speaking of the Death of the King of *Babylon*, whose Body he at the same time foretels should lie unburied, he represents all *Sheol* as moved at his Coming ; and all its Inhabitants as in a great Consternation at his Descent and Arrival amongst them : *Sheol from beneath*, says he, *is moved for thee, to meet thee at thy Coming ; it stirreth*

up

(o) Gen. xxxvii. 35.

up all the Dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the Earth : It hath raised up from their Thrones all the Kings of the Nations. All they shall speak, and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we ? Art thou become like unto us ? Thy Pomp is brought down unto Sheol.—Thou hast said in thine Heart, I will ascend into Heaven.—Yet thou shalt be brought down unto Sheol. They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the Man that made the Earth to tremble ?—All the Kings of the Nations, all of them lie in Glory, every one in his own House, or Sepulchre. But thou art cast out of thy Grave, like an abominable Branch. Thou shalt not be joined with them in Burial ; because thou hast destroyed the Land, and slain thy People (p). But, supposing Sheol in the Old Testament should sometimes be put for the Grave, or be applied indifferently to Soul or Body ; yet Hades, I think, in the New, is never met with, but where it always signifies as before described. For, besides that it is plainly applied to the Soul, and not the Body of Christ, in our Text, it is to be remarked, that his Sepulchre is never so much as once stiled so, though mentioned by the Evangelists more than Thirty times. There is, however, one notable Passage, to pass by those of a more doubtful Nature, where it is used by our Saviour himself ; and where the Word, I presume, can bear no other Sense. The Passage I mean, is in the well-known

Sc 2

Parable

(p) Isa. xiv. 9, &c.

Parable of the impurpled *rich Man* and poor *Lazarus* (q); where our *Saviour* is expressly representing their different States after Death; and, having first lodged the poor Man's Soul in *Abraham's Bosom*, he immediately adds, *The rich Man also died, and was buried; and, in Hades, he lift up his Eyes, being in Torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his Bosom.* Which is so exactly agreeable to the antient *Theology*, and to the antient Sentiments, with regard to *Hades*, that it may well serve as a divine Confirmation, that their Notions as to this State were right in the main; though the *Heathens*, it is owned, had added many Fictions (r). We are here told indeed by a *learned Annotator* (s), that though this *Parable* contains something suitable to the Opinion of the *Jews*, touching the State of Souls after Death, yet it does not respect their State immediately after Death, but after the Resurrection. But, besides that the Scene is expressly laid by our *Saviour* immediately after their Deaths, and while the rich Man's *Brethren* were as yet *alive*; so it is laid, as expressly, in *Hades*; and which is constantly used, as the same *Annotator*

(q) *Luke* xvi. 19, &c. (r) See *Grotius* on *Luke* viii. 31. and xvi. 23. where he tells us, that *Hades* belongs only to Persons deceased, both Good and Bad; and that only in the middle Time between Death and the Resurrection: And that the *rich Man* and *Lazarus* were accordingly both of them *there*, though in divided and different Parts of it. (s) *Dr. Whithy*.

tator has elsewhere assured us (as we shall be satisfied, if we do but examine) by all the antient *Greeks*, the *Jewish* Writers, the Old Testament, and the Translation of the *Seventy*, to signify *the State of Death*, or the *Place* or Receptacle of the Dead, into which *Souls departed* enter (*t*): Though it must be owned, when he comes to our Text, he would fain have it meant of the Grave; which yet it is plain it cannot mean in *this Passage*, whatever it may do elsewhere (*). And from hence, I think, without going any further, we may safely come at last to this Conclusion, That the *Sheol*, or *Hades*, in which the *Soul* of our *Lord* had its Residence, was neither what we mean by *Hell*, nor yet *the Grave*; but the very *Hades* of the antient *Greeks*, the Place of *Souls departed*; and which was not only represented by them, but is also represented in the Scriptures themselves, as a subterraneous

(*t*) See *Whitby's* Annotations upon *Mat.* xvi. 18.

(*) If it should be objected to this, that this Story is all but a *Parable*, or parabolical Representation; I shall only desire it to be considered, Whether it does not become us to think of our *Lord*, as of one that would never speak, whether in or out of *Parable*, so as either to lead his Hearers into any new Errors, or to confirm them in any of their old ones? If it should be further said, But how came *Lazarus* then by a *Finger*, or the *rich Man* to be possessed of a *Tongue*? what is usually said when these Things are found applied to God himself, must of course be sufficient for an Answer here. Nor can we be sure, after all, that it is not true in Fact, that the *Souls* of the Dead retain the same Resemblance, or something like, at least, to what their Bodies had, while living.

terreneous invifible Region in the Bowels of this our Earth. Whence we read of our Lord's lying Three Days in the Heart of the Earth (u); of his descending into the loweft Parts of the Earth (w): And hence it is, that we find in St. Paul, Who fhall descend into the Deep, into the Abyfs, as it is in the Original, to bring Chrift up from the Dead (x)? Hence is it alfo, that we further find, in the ſame Apoſtle, when ſpeaking of the Exaltation of Chrift, that God has highly exalted him, and given him a Name, which is above every Name, that at the Name of Jeſus every Knee ſhould bow, of Things in Heaven, and Things on Earth, and Things under the Earth (y). And laſtly, hence it is alfo, that we are told by St. John, That no one in Heaven, or on Earth, neither under the Earth, was able to open the Seven-ſealed Book: And that, upon our Lord's being found worthy to open it, he heard every Creature which is in Heaven, and on the Earth, and under the Earth, and ſuch as are in the Sea, giving Glory

(u) *Matt. xii. 40.* (w) *Eph. iv. 9.* It having been remarked upon this Paſſage, that this Phraſe is plainly taken from *Pſalm lxiii. 9.* where, if it ſignifies *Hades*, the Foxes muſt go thither alſo; it being added, *They ſhall be a Portion for Foxes*; I beg Leave to obſerve, that it will no more follow from hence, that the *Pſalmiſt* there does not mean *Hades*, than it will, that *Hades* in the Beginning of *Homer* is not meant of the Seat of the Soul; becauſe the Bodies of his Heroes, who went thither, are at the ſame time repreſented as a Prey to Dogs and Birds.

(x) *Rom. x. 7.*

(y) *Philip. ii. 9, 10.*

Glory to God, and the Lamb (z): Where, by the Beings *under the Earth*, that are to bow at the Name of *Jesus*, that were not worthy to open the Book, and that were afterwards heard giving Glory to God, it will be very difficult to understand any thing, unless we understand them of *the Souls of the Dead*; which are as yet in *Hades*, as the Soul of *Christ* himself was, till the time of his Rising again. For, though he carried with him the Soul of the *Thief* to the *Paradise* appointed for holy Souls in *Hades*, yet did he not ascend to his Father, till after his *Resurrection*; as his Words to *Mary* are an evident Proof. I shall only add further, on the present Topic, that how strange soever this Doctrine may seem to some, who have imbibed the Sentiments of these later Times, yet it did not appear so to those antient Writers in the more early Ages of the Christian Church; as will be sufficiently evident from the following Testimonies: *The Souls of the Righteous, after their Deaths, says Justin Martyr, are in a better Mansion than they were before; but the Unrighteous and Wicked, in a worse, waiting till the Time of Judgment comes at length (a).* If our Lord, says Irenæus, observed the Law of the Dead, that he might become the *First-born from the Dead*; and, having stayed even to the *Third Day* in the inward

Parts

(z) Rev. v. 3. 13.
223.

(a) Dial. cum Tryphon. p. 223.

Parts of the Earth, then rising in the Flesh, that he might shew the Marks of the Nails to his Disciples, ascended thus to his Father; how can it be, but that they must be confounded, who assert, that Hell, or Hades, is the World in which we dwell; but that their inward Man, as soon as it leaves their Body, shall immediately ascend to a supercelestial Place? For, since the Lord, in the Midst of the Shadow of Death, departed to the Place where the Souls of the Dead were, and, after that, corporeally rose again, and after his Resurrection was taken up into Heaven; it is manifest, that for that Reason the Souls of his Disciples, for whose sake the Lord performed all this, shall likewise, after their Deaths, go into an invisible Place, which God has prepared and preordained for them, and shall there remain till the Time of the Resurrection; and then receiving Bodies, and perfectly, that is, corporeally, rising again, as the Lord himself did, shall thus be brought to the Enjoyment of the Sight of God (b). And, If Christ, says Tertullian, who was God as well as Man, being dead, according to the Scriptures, and buried, according to the same, paid exact Obedience to this Law, descending formally like the Souls of Men into the lower Parts of the Earth; nor ascended into the Heaven of Heavens, before he descended into the lower Parts of the Earth, that there he might bless the Patriarchs and Prophets with the Sight
which

(b) Irenæus lib. v. cap. xxxi.

surely the Exposition of all the *antient Fathers* is much to be preferred before the new Doctrine of the *Florentine Council* (and which is laid by the Council of *Trent*, as the Foundation of all *Saint-worship*) ; namely, *That the Souls of Saints departed do already behold the Face of God in Heaven**.

But, having said enough, as to the Meaning of the Expression [His Soul was not left in Hell], let me now proceed,

In the SECOND Place, to confirm the Truth of it ; or, which is all the same, That our *Lord* did really *rise* ; whercof, as St. *Peter* assures us, *he* and all the *Apostles* were *Witnesses*. And that their *Testimony* is sufficient, and such as may be safely and fully depended on, will be abundantly evident, if we but consider the following Things. For,

First, How unreasonable is it to imagine, that so many should conspire together, in asserting a wilful Falshood ? And that they should all hold together so firmly in asserting this, not only without any Prospect of worldly Advantage, but in the Midst of a thousand Dangers,

* Since therefore so great a Provision, says Dr. *Burnet*, so great a Weight of Superstition, depends intirely upon this Article, so great a Superstructure upon this Foundation, or upon this Corner-stone. it most highly concerns us to make no rash Concession in a Cause of so vast Importance ; and not to indulge too pious, but too ill-grounded Affections. *Burnet's State of the Dead*, Pag. 106.

Dangers, as that not one of them should be ever drawn to contradict it by all the Sufferings or Tortures that the Malice of Men could inflict on them? Where is the Reason, I say, of supposing, that any Body of Men would so strenuously assert a known Falshood, by which they could expect to get no Good; but, on the contrary, to meet with a great deal of Evil?

And as it is not likely they should thus conspire in a known and unprofitable Falshood, so neither is it likely they should be deceived in the Matter, since he shewed himself alive to them, as St. Luke tells us, by many infallible Proofs, being seen of them Forty Days, and speaking of the Things pertaining to the Kingdom of God (f). And, I delivered unto you first of all, says St. Paul, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our Sins, according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the Third Day, according to the Scriptures; and that he was seen of Cephas, then of the Twelve. After that, he was seen of above Five hundred Brethren at once; of whom the greater Part remain unto this present; but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the Apostles. And, last of all, he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due Time (g). And where is the Probability of supposing, that so many should be deceived

T t 2 in

(f) Acts i. 3.

(g) 1 Cor. xv. 3—8.

in a Matter, of which they had such plain Demonstration, not only seeing and hearing, but also feeling, and handling them too. Nay, should it be supposed, quite contrary to all the Accounts we have of it, that his *former Disciples*, who had believed in him during his Life-time, might be easily deceived in this Matter, as being ready and disposed to believe it, and therefore apt to be content with but small and slender Proofs of it; though it is hardly supposable they would venture their *Lives* for a Matter they had not good Proof of; yet this cannot be supposed of St. Paul, who had no Inclination at all to believe it; but was convinced of it at a time, when he was *zealous* against it, and breathing out *Slaughters* against all that asserted it. And certainly such a Number of Witnesses, who all asserted they had ocular Proofs of it, and who could have no Temptation to assert it, but their Conviction, that it was really the Truth, must be allowed to be a very strong Evidence, and such as it is not easy to avoid the Force of; there being no manner of Reason to suppose, that they were either deceived themselves, or that they could have any Motives for deceiving others, their Eyes and Ears being Proofs of the *former*, and the State of Affairs at that time or the *latter*; which was plainly such as could give them *no Encouragement* to bear Witness to any such thing.

But we have hitherto considered them only as common Witnesses, and such as might be safely trusted in a common Matter; whereas such a Point as this deserves greater Proof, than what may be deemed sufficient for a common Business. It does indeed; nor has such Proof been wanting: For they did not only bear Witness to this Truth in *Words*, but they also *farther* confirmed it by great and numerous *Miracles*, which they wrought every-where, where-ever they came; and this not only in *private*, but in great *Assemblies*, and before *many* and *watchful Spectators*; God bearing them Witness, both with *Signs and Wonders*, and with *divers Miracles and Gifts of the Holy Ghost* (b); to the Astonishment and Confusion of their greatest Enemies; who, not being able either to deny or imitate such Actions, were forced with sufficient Absurdity to ascribe them to the Power of *Magic*; not considering, that the *Devil* would never thus set himself to destroy his own Kingdom, and that such amazing and beneficent Miracles could come only from the *Power of God*.

Nor have we any Reason once to doubt, but that *these Things were done* if we only consider how *impossible* it is for such a Belief as this to have *prevailed* without them, which had not only no Countenance from the higher Powers, but was, on the contrary, persecuted

(b) Heb. II.

cuted by them, for many Ages, with the utmost Rigour ; and yet still increased and flourished, notwithstanding all. Is it to be imagined, that so many both of *Jews* and *Gentiles*, of every Kindred, Tongue, Tribe, and People, should be so far infatuated as to believe such a Doctrine, only upon the bare Authority of a few poor Men, if they had not given some good Proofs of the Truth of it, and gained Credit to their Assertions by the strange Actions they were seen to perform. No Man certainly, that knows any thing of the State of Affairs in those Ages, or indeed in any Age, can once suppose, that such a Doctrine could have gained Belief, or that Men would ever have been prevailed upon to profess their Faith in it, at the most apparent Hazard of their Lives and Fortunes, and respective Families, were it not from such a Confluence of Miracles, as the Scriptures speak of ; it being absolutely necessary, to suppose some such thing, even though no History had told us it was so, in order to give any probable Account, how such a Doctrine spread as it did, in spite of all the Opposition against it ; and when it was not only directly contrary to Mens former *Prejudices*, but also to their *Passions* and secular *Interests*.

For, ' Could ever Ten or Twelve,' says a *judicious Writer*, ' poor illiterate Men (not ' quite mad) agree and resolve to go abroad ' in so different Quarters of the Earth, think-
ing

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ing to turn Mankind from their old religious Customs and Vices, established by Authority, or long Reputation, without Purse, without Arts or Sciences, without any to back them, or recommend them, on purpose to teach and to persuade them to take up the Cross, and be ready to deny themselves all that is pleasing in this World, in hopes of distant unseen Matters in another; and all this, by telling Men a Story of being sent by a great Prophet, hated and crucified at *Jerusalem*, whom they saw again raised from the Dead, and found the Power of his Spirit upon them, as promised? Nay, to go to *Rome*, in all its Pride and Gaiety, and, amidst all their Triumphs and Trophies, to tell this poor Story of their deluded Fancies, and yet to carry all before them, so as to gain vast Numbers over to their Belief, even unto Death? Was this possible, was it credible, if they had not carried with them *divine Credentials*, viz. such miraculous Evidences, as could not well be resisted? In all Quarters they found great Credit: They must then have had something extraordinary to shew in all these Places, some strange Charms. Hence it appears, the Report of their Miracles was not Fiction, since these Effects could come from nothing less than a Divine Power, by which they had been sent on that Errand.

What

' What poor Things are done now by
 ' *Missionaries* abroad, though they set out
 ' with Credit, Correspondence, Power, and
 ' Learning! Let any try with Ten or Twelve
 ' Men sent into different Regions, if they can
 ' do any such Exploits, even though they are
 ' slain and opposed by the governing Powers,
 ' as these were; and yet, if they can do any
 ' thing it must be by the Credit of these
 ' Apostles Credentials and Veracity first esta-
 ' blished: So that the Foundation is laid for
 ' them, which was not for the Apostles:
 ' They began all without any Aids but their
 ' own Credentials, which they carried along
 ' with them; they were often questioned and
 ' examined, and believed that they were in-
 ' deed thus sent of God, and from their risen
 ' Lord his *Son*, relying on his Word *to be*
 ' *with them to the End*, though they saw they
 ' must die for it. Had they been mad Men,
 ' could they have succeeded thus? And, if
 ' not mad, could they have attempted it,
 ' without divine Encouragement and Au-
 ' thority *?'

But, as I would not be tedious in so plain
 a Case, and which, I have Reason to think,
 you all believe already, I shall therefore add
 no more upon this Point at present; but only
 proceed, as was proposed,

* Memoirs of the Life of Mr. Thomas Emlyn, Pag.
 78.

In the LAST Place, to draw an Inference or two from the Whole.

And, *First*, Was our Lord thus plainly declared to be *the Son of God with Power*, by his *Rising again* from the Dead? Did he really rise, according to his own Predictions? Then we have certainly the highest Reason to believe in every thing that he has told us. For who, besides him, ever gave such a Proof of their Doctrine? I had said, or so much as pretended to it, but that I have heard there was such a Pretension, with regard to the Rising of *Emes* the *French* Prophet; though that Pretension was never made good: Whereas our *Jesus* openly shewed himself alive to even *more than Five hundred Spectators*; and afterwards ascended visibly into Heaven in the open Day-light, and in the Presence of *all his Apostles*: Which must sure be a sufficient Foundation for embracing his holy Religion, and for adhering steadily to it both in Life and Death. But, to be a little more practical:

Have we such Proofs, in the *Second* Place, for the Christian Doctrine? Then let us see, that we take care to live up to it. Let us not only call *Christ, Lord*; but let us take care to do the Things which he says; and, as we name his Name, depart from all Iniquity. He did not only rise for himself, but, as the First-fruits of all that sleep. His Re-

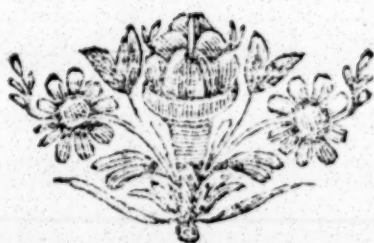
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surrection

urrection was a Proof, a Pledge, and an Earnest of ours. Let us therefore be giving Diligence to arise from the Death of Sin at present, that we may arise to Joy and Happiness hereafter; as considering that there is a Resurrection to *Death*, as well as to *Life* and *Happiness*; and which will be the Portion of all, that lead wicked and ungodly Lives; but, in a more particular manner, of all wicked *Christians*, if it be proper to call such by that sacred Name, who only own in *Words* the *Saviour's* Doctrine, but disregard it in their *Lives* and *Actions*. As we therefore know, and profess to believe these Things, let us be solicitous to act and to behave accordingly. Let us not be guilty of receiving this excellent Knowledge in vain; but, as the Holy Gospel of our Saviour has appeared unto us, and we have a glorious Resurrection therein set before us, let it have its due Effect and Influence upon us. Let us walk worthy, in some measure, of the Vocation wherewith we have been called, and of the glorious Prospects that we have in View. And, to this End, let us consider, that our Race is but short, and such as will quickly be over, while the glorious Fruit of it is eternal Life. Nor should we forget, as a further Encouragement against any Difficulties we may happen to meet with, to have a firm Dependence on *the Grace of God*, which is sufficient to enable us to do all Things he requires from

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from us, to give us *Strength* at all times equal to our *Day*, and to make us even *more than Conquerors* through him that *loved us*, and so loved us as to *die* for our Sins, and to *rise again* for our Justification : *To whom be Honour and Glory throughout all the Churches, both now, and for ever ! Amen.*





S E R M O N XV.

*Of the intrinsic Excellence of the
Moral Law.*

Rom. vii. 12.

*Wherefore the Law is holy; and the Command-
ment holy, and just, and good.*

THE great Design of the Author, in this Epistle, was to recommend the Christian Scheme to *Jew* and *Gentile*, and to shew the Necessity they were both under of embracing it, as they would have any comfortable and well-grounded Hopes of being justified and accepted in the Sight of God. To which Purpose, he shews them at large, that there was no other Law yet given, by which they could hope to have Life, or that could answer that desirable End, save only *the Law of Faith.*

Faith. He begins, after his usual Salutation, of wishing them *Grace and Peace*, and expressing his Desire to come and preach to them Face to Face, with a short, but full Description of the deplorable State of the *Gentiles*, who had miserably wandered from the *Law of Nature*, and therefore stood justly condemned by it, both for their Idolatry, and other Enormities. After which, he goes on to shew the State of the *Jews* to be little or nothing better; and that whatever Boasts they might make of their superior Knowledge, and of their being *instructed out of the Law*, yet that they also stood justly condemned for their manifest Breach of the Law; and that their knowing, and yet breaking the Law, did but make them the more inexcusable. From which he proceeds and goes on to conclude, that as all had sinned, and fallen short of the Glory of God, so that neither *Jew* nor *Gentile* could expect to be justified by the several Laws they were under, by which they both of them stood condemned, and from which Condemnation they could only be delivered by the Grace of God through *Christ*, and by their dutiful Submission to that Law of Faith, by which Salvation could only be had, and which would be equally effectual to the Salvation of all that embraced it, whether *Jew* or *Gentile*, without any Difference.

This is plainly the grand Design the Apostle had in View in this Epistle, and which he is
Here

here pursuing in the present *Chapter* where he is not speaking of himself, as some have imagined, as a regenerate Christian struggling under the Remains of Corruption, but as a Person *under the Law*, lamenting his deplorable Condition, in that, though willing and desirous to fulfil the Law, and so to attain to be justified by it, yet the Law in his Members will not permit him to attain to that Perfection it requires from him. But we are not, says the Apostle, to infer from hence, that the Law is therefore evil in itself, or that we are delivered from the Curse of it for any such Reason, as that the Law was bad or faulty, or required any thing from us but what was right and fitting; for the Fault is not in Law, but in us, who break the Law, and who, by violating those holy and divine Commandments, which are righteous and good in themselves, and designed to fit us for an happy and immortal Life, do thereby bring ourselves under its condemning Sentence, the just Reward of our unlawful Deeds.

But I only mention these Things in a transient and cursory Manner, that you may see a little how the Words are connected. My chief Business at present is, to shew the Truth of them, or to make it out, as the *Apostle* here says, that *the Law* indeed *is holy*, and all its Commandments *holy, just, and good*. Where, by the Law, let me observe once for all, that I mean that *moral Law*, which has
been

been always in Force from the Beginning, and will continue to be so even to all Eternity. For, as to the positive *Rituals* of the Law of *Moses*, as they were not always, nor are now, in Force, and were only instituted for particular Purposes, which the State of the *Jews* then required; so were they no further to be considered as valuable, than as they tended to the Promotion of an higher End, even to that moral Rectitude of Heart and Conduct, which was always esteemed as the chief and principal Thing, and to which Burnt-offerings and Sacrifice bore no Proportion. Accordingly the *Apostle*, in his Reasoning on this Head, does not instance in any of these, but in one of the Ten Commands, *Thou shalt not covet* (a). And though he represents himself as *once alive without the Law* (b), namely, before the giving of the Law by *Moses*, yet it was not because the moral Law was not all that time in Force, but because it had not then Death for its Sanction, as the **Mosaic* Law afterwards had; and therefore could not condemn Men to Death in the manner that afterwards did; the Death or Mortality which at that time reigned, and which did not exclude the Hopes of Restoration, being either only, or for the most part, however, the natural Consequence of the Fall of *Adam*, and which, by virtue of the Sentence that was passed on him, reigned likewise

(a) Verse 7. (b) Verse 9. * *Mosaic* Law—from the Prophet *Moses*: *Mosaic* Pavement—a beautiful Marble Pavement, as if invented by, or fit for the *Muses*.

likewise over all his Posterity, even though they had not sinned after the Similitude of his Transgression, or transgressed any positive Law, which condemned them to Death for so doing; the Wisdom and Fitness of which seemingly strange Proceeding shall be shewn by-and-by in the Sequel.

In the mean time, let us proceed to the more immediate Consideration of the Point more directly before us; namely, that the Law is holy, and just, and good—*Holy* with regard to itself, as commanding nothing but what is strictly pure, and exactly agreeable to God's holy Nature; *just* and proper both for God to injoin, and for us to obey and comply with; and *good*, with regard to its Intent and End, as being given only with a good Design to promote our truest and eternal Welfare. This is plainly the Truth of the Case, how much soever the carnal Mind may be averse to receive it as such; and a shining Truth it is, though, as it was said of our blessed Redeemer, *it shines in Darknes, and the Darknes comprehendeth it not* (c). Unthinking Souls, and who love Darknes better than Light, for a Reason long since given (d), are apt to look on the Law as on an evil Thing, and on the holy Commandment with an evil Eye. They *take Counsel together against the Lord, and against his Anointed*, saying, *Let us break their Bands asunder, and cast away their Cords from us*. But, *He that sitteth in the Heavens shall*

(c) *John i. 5.* (d) *John iii. 19.*

shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in Derision. He shall speak to them in his Wrath, and vex them in his sore Displeasure (e). The Laws of God are with them a very grievous and intolerable Burden, a Burden which they care not to bear. It is a thousand pities, they think, that they cannot have the Liberty to act as they will, and to follow the Dictates of their Hearts Desires, without being curbed and checked by Laws, and affrighted by the grievous and tremendous Threatenings of being *punished with an everlasting Destruction from the Presence of the Lord, and from the Glory of his Power (f)*; a thing which they like not to think of, and would therefore fain, if they knew but how, persuade themselves out of the Truth of.

But it is no such Wonder, that the carnal Man, and who pretends not to be any otherwise, should thus set himself to censure and condemn the Laws. Were there such only found guilty of this, the Case would not be so surprising. But what must we think of those, who give it out they are spiritual Men, and the very best at least, if not the only true People of God, and yet as industriously set themselves to decry the Law, and to speak as contemptibly of moral Virtue, as if the greatest Virtue lay in despising Virtue, and to love God, and hate his Laws, were one and the self-same thing? Would one imagine there

X x

should

(e) *Pf. ii. 2---5.*(f) *1 Theff. i. 8, 9.*

should be any such People, as should pretend to do this from a religious Principle ? or that could ever take such a Doctrine of Darkneſs as this, for a Doctrine of Light ? Would one imagine, there ſhould be any that could make it a Point of Conſcience, to do their utmoſt endeavour to revile good Works ? I muſt confeſs, one could hardly believe it, if we had not too evident Proof of it : For what muſt ſuch People think of the Law ? They muſt think it a mere arbitrary Thing, which may be eaſily diſpenſed with at Pleaſure ; a thing which is no-way neceſſary in order to fit Men for preſent, or for future Happineſs, but which was only given to keep them from Idleneſs, or that they ſhould not be happy at too cheap a Rate ; or that God might take an Opportunity from thence to ſhew his Juſtice, and have an Excuse for puniſhing and finding fault with ſome, and an Opportunity to ſhew his Grace in pardoning others. And theſe, I doubt, are the childiſh Conceptions, to call them by no harſher a Name of too many who ought to know better, and who have a Book in their Hands, which, if they would but attend to it, would teach them better things, than to think ſo meanly of the Beſt of Beings. For is there any one Truth more plainly revealed than this, that *God is good* ? Yea, good in ſuch a Senſe, in ſuch an high and ſuperlative Senſe, that, as our Saviour ſays, there is no one good but he — *There is none good but*
One,

One, that is, God (g). The Goodness of Men or Angels is as nothing, compared with his, whose *Goodness* extends to all, and whose *tender Mercies* are over all his Works (h). If this may be reckoned a disputed Point, it must be very difficult to know what is not so; for, I think, one may venture to say, that if this Truth is not clearly revealed, there is no one thing in the whole Word of God that is. And, indeed, to doubt of this, is so very little better than Atheism, that, perhaps, in some respects, it may be deemed as worse; for who does a Man the most Injury, or gives him the greatest Stab, he who says he does not know him, or will not believe there is any such Person; or he who says he does, but that he is a Being of so little Goodness, that it would be better for the World, if there were no such Being in it? The Application is easily made, and the Answer as easily found. Let it but then be allowed as a firm and stable Truth, that God is really a good and gracious God, and it must follow of course, as the *Apostle* here asserts, that *the Law is really holy, just, and good*. For if God be as good as the Scripture declares, and as we, as Christians, profess to believe, his Laws must be given with a good Design; not with an Intent to vex and to perplex his Creatures, or as a needless unprofitable Task, that has no other Connexion with their future Happiness, than

X x 2

what

(g) *Matt.* xix. 17.(h) *Pf.* cxlv. 9.

what arises merely from his Will and Pleasure, who is not willing they should be happy for nothing, but that they should earn their Happiness before they have it ; but they must be given for other, and quite different Reasons ; *namely*, because it is impossible, in the Nature of Things, that we should ever be happy without them, or without that Temper of Mind which they require.

And the same Consequence will as naturally arise, if we consider the Deity in another Light, as an infinitely perfect, all-sufficient Being, and who, as *St. Paul* justly observed to the *Athenians*, is not *worshiped with Mens Hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all Life, and Breath, and all things* (i).

It will, I believe, be universally allowed, that we cannot be profitable to God ; and that our Righteousness cannot extend unto him, so as to render him ever the better, or to add any thing at all to his Happiness, which does not depend on us, or our Proceedings, but on his own infinite and glorious Perfections, which are always the same, without Change, or even *Shadow of turning* (k). And therefore his Laws cannot be calculated for his own Advantage, or because our Obedience thereto is of any real Service to him, who must always be happy, let us act and behave how we will ; but because our Obedience thereto is absolutely necessary to promote our
own

(i) *Acts* xvii. 25.(k) *James* i. 17.

own Happiness, which can be the only thing in View to a Being so good, and so perfect, and, consequently, the only End for which his Laws are given. For as, if we imagine, that our Service is any-way advantageous to him, we thereby evidently suppose, that his Happiness is imperfect without it, and make him in a sort our Dependent; so, if, allowing his perfect Beatitude, we yet suppose he has given us Laws, which are no-way naturally necessary to our own Felicity, and are therefore rather an Obstacle than a Help to our obtaining Happiness, we as basely vilify and asperse his Goodness, and, in effect, set up an *Evil* and an *Idol God*, in the room of him who is the *only Good* and *True*.

But, though this is enough to silence every Cavil, and to convince us, that it must necessarily be, as the *Apostle* here declares in the Text, that the Law of God is *holy, just, and good*; though we may be satisfied, I say, of this Truth, from the Consideration of the Nature of God, as a good and perfect Being; yet, for the fuller Satisfaction of any who yet may doubt of it, and for our fuller Conviction in this so important a Point, in which the divine Honour and Glory are so much concerned, I shall proceed to evince it yet further, from the Consideration of the Nature of the Law itself; and to shew how necessary its Precepts and Appointments are, in order to secure the Happiness of the whole Creation ;
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and that there is, in short, no such thing as deviating or departing from them, without introducing Unhappiness in some Degree. And this I shall shew,

In the FIRST Place, with regard to our State here *on Earth*; where it is acknowledged, that Laws are so necessary, that it is even become a proverbial Saying, *If there were no Law, there would soon be no living.* It is true, a perfect Obedience to the Laws of God is not absolutely necessary to our living here; for we may live, in some manner, in a corrupt and degenerate World: But then, the Question is not, Whether Vice will not consist with a miserable Existence? for this is owned to be indeed but the natural Fruit of it; but, Whether a perfect Obedience to the Laws of God is not absolutely necessary to a perfect Happiness? And whether the more these Laws are transgressed, there is not the more Infelicity thereby occasioned? And this, I think, can admit of no Dispute. The present melancholy State of Affairs, with regard to the World in general, is but too full, and too glaring, a Proof of it. The Want of the Fear of God before Mens Eyes, into how many Evils does it daily run them? How many dismal Tragedies are daily acted, the Fruits of lawless and ungoverned Lusts? Rapes, Robberies, Murders, and a Train of Evils, which shew the Use of Laws, to keep
Men

Men from them, but which nothing but the Fear of God can ever put an effectual End to? But, let this once prevail, the thing is done. Let the *Wicked cease from troubling*, and the *Weary* will have *Rest*. Let Men but *fear God*, and *keep his Commandments*; let them but *follow Peace with all Men, and Holiness*, without which no Man shall see the Lord; let them but substitute *Mercy and Goodness*, instead of *Rage and Cruelty*; let but *Faith and Truth* take place of *Fraud and Treachery*, and *Love and Peace* take place of *Strife and Envy*; let them but once unite in giving *Glory to God on high*, and in cultivating *Peace upon Earth*, and universal *Good-will* to each other; and there is no Man, I believe, but must own, that the World would be a great deal more happy, and that it would not long deserve the Title of an evil and troublesome World, which, it must be owned, at present, it deserves but too justly, and yet deserves it for no other Reason, but because the Laws of God are not better and more observed. For, *From whence*, says the Apostle James, *come Wars and Fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your Lusts, that war in your Members* (l)? These are what make *Envy and Strife*, and are the Cause of *Confusion*, and every evil Work (m). When we complain therefore of the Evil of the World, we should do well to consider, what is the proper Cause

(l) James iv. 1.

(m) James iii. 16.

Cause of it, and to consider the Law of God, as that which alone can cure it; and as what is not therefore only *holy*, but likewise *just and good*, and such as, if rightly and duly attended to, would be an inestimable Blessing to the World in general.

But, having thus seen the Usefulness of the Law in this World, let us go on, and proceed a Step further, and we shall find, that it is not in this Life only that the Law is useful, but that it is likewise equally useful in the Life to come. Let us then suppose ourselves stript of these Bodies, and our Souls conveyed to that separate State, that appointed Seat for Souls, and which the *New Testament Writers* call by the Name of *Hades* (n); a Name sufficiently known to the *Antients* (but confounded with *Hell*, and the *Grave*, in our *Translation*), and by which they generally meant a subterraneous Region, into which the Souls of all descended after Death, and even that of our Saviour himself (o), and in which the Souls of the Just are divided from those of the Unjust by a large and impassable Gulph (p), which has the Realms of *Paradise* situate on one Side, and those of the *Spirits in Prison* on the other, all waiting the coming of the Judge to Judgment (q). But,
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(n) See the Original of *Luke* xvi. 23. *Acts* ii. 27. 31. *1 Cor.* xv. 55. *Rev.* i. 18. and vi. 8. and xx. 13, 14. (o) *Acts* ii. 27. 31. (p) *Luke* xvi. 26. (q) They that would see more of this, may consult *King*
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be this as it will, we certainly know thus much of it, that it is a State of Separation from Body, a Region or Country of Souls. Here then, perhaps, you will be apt to imagine, the Use of Laws must cease ; for that Souls can neither help or injure one another, and that all Temptations and Occasions of Evil must together with the Body be utterly laid aside. But, by what Divinity, or by what Philosophy, you will be able to prove this Assertion, I am strangely at a Loss to conceive. I deny not, indeed, but that Death will deprive us of many Temptations, and of many Occasions of sinning ; but it is certainly going too far to assert, it will do so of all ; for there could then be no such thing as a wicked or evil Spirit. Allowing, therefore, that there shall then be no room for the actual Commission of some particular Sins, such as Murder, for Instance, which that State will by no means admit of ; yet will it no-way follow from hence, that Sinners shall therefore lose their Inclinations, or that the same Temper of Mind will not be left remaining. Malice and Hate, we see, can reach to Death ; and who can say they will not reach beyond it ? Is there any Reason at all to maintain, that such as go out of this World bitter Enemies, shall immediately become good Friends, as soon as ever they

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on the Creed, on the Article, *He descended into Hell* ;
and Burnet's State of the Dead, Chap. iii.

enter the other? or that there shall be no Room in that other State for Envy, Strife, and stubborn Disobedience? but that Sinners and Saints shall friendly join together, and be all of one Heart, and of one Mind, in that State, though they were so very far from being so in this? Is it not easy to see, that this is all mere Dream? We change indeed our Country at Death, but we do not change our Nature. With the same Temper we depart out of this World, with the same shall we enter the other; and they, whose Tempers are wrong while here, will find them wrong when there; and therefore the separate State would be likewise a State of Confusion, as well as the present, were it not that those who love and who observe the Laws, shall be severed from those who do not do so; and thereby have a fine Opportunity afforded them of yet still further increasing in Goodness, and of going on to perfect what was here begun. For Vice is naturally such a Bar to Happiness, that there is no such thing as settling any happy State, but by *gathering out of it all Things that offend, and them which do Iniquity* (z). Contentment, Love, and Peace, and a cheerful Obedience to superior Powers, must be the Ingredients of Happiness in every State whatever; and their opposite Vices must occasion Confusion and Discord, Disorder and wretched Uneasiness: And therefore the

(z) *Mat.* xiii. 41.

the Law which inculcates these Virtues, and prohibits the opposite Vices, must be equally necessary in every State of Existence ; nor is it possible to conceive of any happy or blessed Society, either in or out of the Body, but where these Precepts are duly observed. So true is it, as the *Apostle* here says, that *the Law is holy*, and all its Commandments *holy, just, and good* : Nor should I have led you into the Regions of the Dead, but that you might see this great Truth the more strongly.

And, for this Purpose, I shall likewise go on, to what we may call the *Third Stage* of Existence, or our Return to the Body again, in the *millennial Kingdom of Christ*, or the Reign of the Saints *upon Earth*, which takes place at the *first Resurrection*, and is to continue from thence the Space of a *Thousand Years*. There are so many Places of Scripture which seem plainly to relate to this Kingdom, and Reign of the Saints, as cannot, I think, but merit more Attention than the Age at present seems disposed to give them. But its precise Duration for a Thousand Years, for which Reason it is called the *Millennium*, is only mentioned by the *Apostle John* ; where he tells us, that he *saw Thrones, and they sat upon them, and Judgment was given unto them; and that he saw the Souls of them that were beheaded for the Witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God ; and which had not worshiped the Beast, neither his Image neither had re-*

ceived his Mark upon their Foreheads, or in their Hands : And they lived and reigned with Christ a Thousand Years ; but the rest of the Dead lived not again, until the Thousand Years were finished. This is the first Resurrection. Blessed and holy is he, that hath Part in the first Resurrection : On such the second Death hath no Power, but they shall be Priests of God, and of Christ, and shall reign with him a Thousand Years (s). But it is not my Business at present, to prove this Point ; but only to make out the Truth of the Text, and to shew, that the Law is *holy, just, and good*, in every supposeable State of Life whatever, or that it is really calculated for the Good of Mankind, both in this and all future Existence.

And here, supposing the Souls of the Saints to quit the separate State, and to act again in Bodies, in the *New Jerusalem*, which is to descend out of Heaven from God (t) ; supposing the Earth to be renewed, and restored to a paradisiacal State (u) ; supposing the Kingdom and Dominion, and the Greatness of the Kingdom under the whole Heaven, to be given to the People of the Saints of the Most High (w) ; and that then, as our Saviour promises to all that overcome, they shall have

(s) *Rev.* xx. 4, 5, 6. (t) *Gal.* iv. 26. *Rev.* iii. 12. and *xxi.* 2. 10. (u) *Isa.* lxxv. 17. 2 *Pet.* iii. 13. *Rev.* *xxi.* 1. 5. and *xxii.* 1, 2. (w) *Dan.* vii. 27.

have *Power over the Nations* (x) ; supposing, I say, these Things, and to which our Saviour very probably alludes, when he represents himself as saying to one, *Have thou Authority over Ten Cities* ; and to another, *Be thou over Five* (y) ; there can, I think, be no Dispute, but that Men intrusted with such great Power should be Men of Justice, Probity, and Goodness, and greatly endowed with all those Christian Virtues, that may render them fit to be Kings and Priests to God, and to enjoy such Power and Dominion under him. I am not now, as I said before, debating the Truth of this State, I am only at present supposing it : And, upon this Supposition, you will all of you, I dare say, allow me, that such Power as this is not fit to be trusted to any one, but only to such as are properly qualified for it ; and that to intrust it in wicked and improper Hands, must be to the last Degree pernicious and destructive, and make the new State of Things full as bad, if not worse than the old. So that, suppose what State we will, we can never find the happy State we look for, till we meet with one which is established according to the Law, and in which the Laws of Virtue, and of God, take place. A lawless Rout, divided by Party and Faction, governed by separate and private Interest, and at Strife and Enmity among themselves, or, if you would

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(x) *Rev. ii. 26.*(y) *Luke xiii. 12, &c.*

have it in other Words, a licentious Crew, that are left to act at random, Strangers to Justice, Probity, and Goodness, alike unfit to govern or obey, can never be happy, place them where you please. In this, or other States, it is all the same; Vice and Unhappiness go hand-in-hand, nor is it possible to bring in one without the other.

But I come now to the Consideration of that, which may be stiled the *Last Stage* of Existence, or our Living for ever in *Heaven*. And this is that indeed, which crowns the Whole; and for which it is the Design of every other State to fit us. And here, as well as in the other Stages, shall we find the Use and Benefit of Laws, and of a Mind inured to yield Obedience to them. It is this indeed which constitutes the Bliss, and makes us meet and fit for Immortality. An evil Being is not fit for this: The public Welfare calls for his Destruction; and not only Justice, but Goodness itself, is concerned in the taking such out of the Way, and thereby putting a Stop to what would else destroy all Happiness, and bring Confusion on the whole Creation. As to the particular Nature of the heavenly Life, it must be confessed indeed we know but very little; but, so far as we are able to know of it, the Use of Laws is as plain in that, as in any other State whatever. And if one may be allowed to judge from the divine Proceedings, and from our
being

being to be trained up for it in other previous States besides the present, it should seem that as that is the most perfect State, so the greatest Perfection is needful to fit us for it. And how much soever we are at present ignorant of its Nature, we may yet, I think, safely assert, that it will not be an idle and inactive State, but a State of great and of divine Employments. We are told by our Saviour, that we shall then be *as the Angels of God* (x); who are so far from idle and inactive Beings, that they are, on the contrary, represented in Scripture, as *ministring Spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be Heirs of Salvation* (a); and whose Business it is to execute God's *Commandments*, and to *hearken to the Voice of his Word* (b). It can therefore be no unreasonable Supposition, that we shall likewise be ministring Spirits in some Worlds as yet unknown, and perhaps as yet unmade. It must at least be a more reasonable Supposition, than that we shall spend an Eternity in doing nothing, or in doing nothing but in *singing Hymns*; as it will furnish us with Employment that is fit for a rational and exalted Being, and that is at the same time admirably suited to promote its Happiness Employment highly delightful in itself, leading to an Increase both of Knowledge and Virtue, and of Use to other Parts of God's

(x) *Mat. xxii. 30.*
ciii. 20.

(a) *Heb. i. ult.*

(b) *Psal.*

God's Creation. And, as to the Supposition of there being such Worlds, in which glorified Beings may be thus employed ; there is hardly any considerate Man, that, at this time of Day, will dispute it ; there being a great many Reasons to be given for it, and not so much as one of any Weight against it. And, if this be the Case, Beings fitted for such an Employment must be Beings of Wisdom, and exalted Piety, and that will yield a steady Obedience to all the Will of God. They must not think it beneath them to wait on inferior Creatures, any more than Angels do to wait on us. They must neither look with Envy on those *above*, nor with Scorn on those *below* them. They must have the greatest Charity to one another, and be each contented with their several Stations. They must have a great deal of Kindness for those Beings to whom they are sent, and exercise great Forbearance and Long-suffering towards them. In short, they must be faithful Ministers to the God that sends them, and make his Will the Rule of all their Actions, from which it is impossible for them to deviate, but that great Inconveniencies must thence ensue, both with regard to themselves, and those committed to them. But, even supposing the Account we have given should be merely imaginary, this great Truth, that the Law is *holy, just, and good*, is still as firm and unshaken as ever. Love to God, and each other,

other, a ready Submission to his heavenly Will, and a chearful Contentment with their several Portions, must be essential to their Happiness, let their Employment be what it will: And introduce but Pride, and Discontent, and Envy, restless Ambition, and untamed Desires; and their Happiness will immediately vanish, and their Heaven be turned from a State of Love, and Unity, and Peace, into a State of Strife, and everlasting Discord. Such Troublers of *Israel* must therefore be kept excluded, or Peace is never like to rest upon them.

And now, What is the Use that we should make of this, but to approve the Law as *holy, just, and good*, forbearing all hard Thoughts, and all rash Censures, and setting ourselves to obey it accordingly? I must seriously profess, that I cannot but wonder at such, as are for giving the Law so many hard and reproachful Titles; and who as strenuously set themselves to oppose and vilify it, as if their eternal Salvation depended on that very Thing, and there was hardly any thing so pleasing to God, as to find fault with that, which he was pleased to give, and which he has not only never repealed, but there is no Reason at all to imagine he ever will. It is true, he does not insist on our perfect Obedience thereto, as a necessary Term of Acceptance; for he considers our Frame; he remembers we are but Dust; and he knows,

that, thro' the Weakness of the Flesh, such Perfection is hardly, if at all, attainable, while we sojourn in a wicked and degenerate World. But then this is not, because the Law is not holy and good in itself, and a necessary Rule for the Conduct of rational Agents ; but out of pure Condescension to his Creatures Frailties : And therefore he still expects, that we should keep it as well as we can, though we cannot in the utmost Extent of it.

But here I expect it will be objected, and it is but natural indeed for such an Objection as this to arise ; That if what I have been saying be true ; if the Law is really so holy, just, and good ; and a perfect Conformity to its holy Precepts is so absolutely necessary to a perfect Happiness, that there cannot in the Nature of Things be any such State without it ; how is it then, that this Perfection is dispensed with by the new Law of Grace in the Gospel ; and that a sincere, tho' imperfect, Obedience is accepted to Salvation, instead of it ? To which I answer, That a perfect Obedience is really necessary to a perfect Happiness, and as necessary now as it was at the first Creation ; and that therefore no Man shall be admitted to the Presence of God in Heaven, till he can be presented before him without Spot, and blameless. And this, if I am not very greatly mistaken, is likewise
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the Doctrine of Scripture (c); which does not represent Men as judged, and as going to Heaven directly; but as going from hence to an intermediate State (d), where they may have an Opportunity of improving their imperfect Holiness, and of attaining to that blessed Perfection when out of the Body, which it is not easy, if possible, to attain while in it.

And this affords us a very good Reason why Men die, even though their Persons are justified, and their Sins are pardoned; and is what the *Apostle* seems plainly to refer to, when he tells us in the following Chapter, that *the Body indeed is dead, because of Sin; but the Spirit is Life, or lives, because of Righteousness* (e). And it may help to confirm us in this, that we find the very same Reason assigned by the *antient Fathers*. For, *God did not, say they, cast Man out from Paradise, and remove him from the Tree of Life, because he envied him the Fruit of that Tree, as some have said; but out of Pity and Compassion, that he might not be always a Transgressor, and that Sin and Misery might not be made immortal and incurable; interposing Death, and making Sin to cease. And again, God permits good Men to die, that Sin might not live for ever in them; doing this not so much out of Displeasure to punish them for Sin, as out of Mercy*

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(c) 2 Pet. iii. 14. Eph. v. 27. Jude Ver. 24. (d) See Whitby on 2 Tim. iv. 8. (e) Rom. viii. 10.

356 *Of the intrinsic Excellence* Serm. XV.
to free them from it (f). Behold then here
the Wisdom and Goodness of God, in ap-
pointing Death for sinful fallen Man; and
cease your Murmuring, and complain no
longer. Death reigns indeed, and reigns
through *one Offence*; but it reigns for the De-
struction and the Cure of many; and good
Men only die to rise more perfect. *O the Depth*
of the Riches both of the Wisdom and Know-
ledge of God! How unsearchable are his Judg-
ments, and his Ways past finding out (g)! Yet
the more we know of them, the more we
see his Goodness, that even in the midst of
Judgment he remembers Mercy; and that
Sin is permitted *to reign unto Death*, that
Grace may reign through Righteousness unto
eternal Life, by Jesus Christ our Lord (h).
So much Wisdom and Mercy may we find
in that, which has been so often represented
as an unaccountable Scene of Severity; when
the Truth of the Matter is no more than this,
that it is now become necessary for us, as
fallen and sinful Creatures, to pass to that
Happiness thro' the Gates of Death, which,
if we had not been Sinners, we might have
arrived at without.

Let us then be firmly persuaded, that God
indeed is good; and that he never acts, but
with a good Design: And let us not join in
the Cry of *wicked and slothful Servants*, that
would

(f) See *Whitby* on the last-cited Passage. (g) *Rom.*
xi. 33. (h) *Rom. v. ult.*

would represent him as *hard and austere*. A filial Concern for the Honour and Glory of our heavenly Father, whose Offspring we all of us are, and upon whose Grace and Goodness all our Hopes depend, should lead us methinks to reject such rash Conceptions, and to cast them out, as Enemies both to God and Man. The Lord is good; and so are all his Laws, holy and good, like Him from whom they come. Let us then learn for the future to look on his Laws in this Light; not as positive arbitrary Things, commanded only for Commanding-sake; but as a necessary Path, in which Creatures must walk to Felicity; and let us learn to love, and to esteem them as such. Young Children, it is true, are apt to look on their Tutors Injunctions in much the same Light, as Sinners do on the Law; but, as they advance in Age, they come to see the Use of them. Let us then, who pretend to be Men, learn to put away childish Things. In *Malice*, indeed, let us be *Children*; but, in *Understanding*, let us be *Men*. Finally, Let us all endeavour to grow in Knowledge, and in Grace, *till we all come, as the Apostle expresses it, in the Unity of the Faith, and of the Knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect Man, unto the Measure of the Stature of the Fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more Children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every Wind of Doctrine, by the Slight of Men, and cunning Craftiness,*

356 *Of the intrinsic Excellence* Serm. XV.
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358 *Of the intrinsic Excellence, &c. Serm. XV.*
Craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive :
But, speaking the Truth in Love, may grow
up into him in all Things, which is the Head,
even Christ ; From whom the whole Body fitly
joined together, and compacted by that which
every Joint supplieth, according to the effectual
Working in the Measure of every Part, maketh
Increase of the Body unto the edifying of itself
in Love (i). Which God, of his Mercy, grant
may be all our Case ! To whom be Glory
for ever ! Amen.

(i) *Eph. iv. 13, 14, 15, 16.*

The E N D.



